

THE JESSE JAMES STORIES

ORIGINAL NARRATIVES OF THE JAMES BOYS

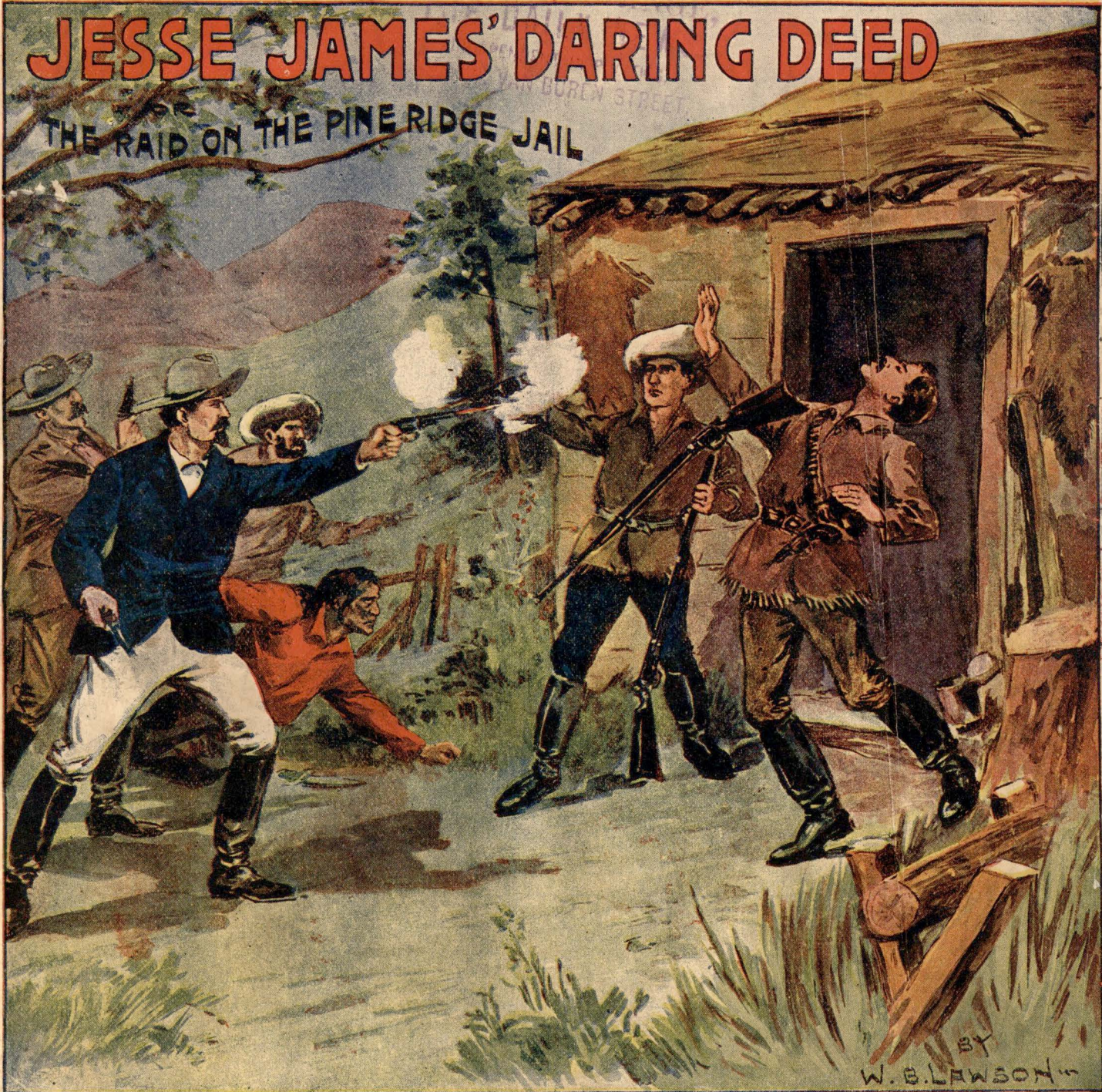
Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 8.

Price, Five Cents.

JESSE JAMES' DARING DEED

THE RAID ON THE PINE RIDGE JAIL



BY
W. B. LAWSON

"AT 'EM, BOYS!" YELLED JESSE, AND WITH A VOLLEY OF SHOTS THE SCENE CHANGED LIKE MAGIC.



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NEW YORK, June 29, 1901.

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JESSE JAMES' DARING DEED;

OR,

The Raid on the Pine Ridge Jail.

By W. B. LAWSON.

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305 W. VAN BUREN STREET

CHAPTER I.

A STIRRING SCENE.

"Hello! Here's a pretty fix! Now, what in thunder is to be done, old fellow?"

The words were spoken by a young man, who was bending over a fallen horse in the bushes near a narrow roadway, and the remark was occasioned by the clatter of hoofs that was growing rapidly louder.

The next second a revolver cracked sharply, and the horse that had just fallen and broken its leg was out of its misery.

Then Norman Taylor, a Pinkerton detective, who was scouring the country on the track of Jesse James, disappeared behind the bushes.

As he did so, a party of twelve horsemen came galloping from the direction of the nearest village, a mining settlement of three hundred inhabitants, which bore the name of Gold City.

Arriving within twenty feet of the detective's hiding-place, they pulled up sharply and dismounted, then rap-

idly hid both themselves and their horses in the bushes on the opposite side of the road.

"Well, I'll be hanged! I had no idea of setting the style!" muttered Taylor.

"Now, what in thunder is the meaning of all this? There's something in the wind!"

He parted the bushes so that a good view of the roadway was afforded him, then his hand fell to his waist, and he made a startling discovery.

When his horse pitched forward he had taken a header into a ditch, and, no doubt, his cartridge belt had snapped, for the article, with one pistol, was now missing.

The revolver in his possession was all that remained for his protection. He had been riding with it in his hand, and now he was chagrined to see that every chamber was empty.

His last bullet had been fired at the suffering horse.

Whatever was about to happen could interest him now only as a witness, for a man without a "pop" could not

play any active rôles in the tragedies of the Rocky Mountains.

He had not long to wait, for in less than five minutes after the last man was hidden, a group of six mounted Indians appeared upon the crest of the steep hill, and made their way slowly down in the direction of the village.

Then another figure dashed over the brow of the hill.

It was a beautiful girl of seventeen, mounted on a spirited broncho.

As the young girl passed the redskins she looked back over her shoulder and smiled.

"Come on, Lone Wolf! Come, Star Eye!" she called back, gayly. "Why do you look so fierce? No one will harm me! It is a pity if Unitah cannot visit the village store once in a twelvemonth! They do not dare to touch me!"

The words were hardly out of her mouth before a shrill whistle sounded.

Instantly the posse of men sprang from behind the rocks and bushes, and, with cocked revolvers in their hands, surrounded the girl and the redskins.

"Throw up your hands!" roared a bull-like voice.

The detective recognized it as belonging to Peter Banning, the sheriff of the county.

Banning was heading off the little band, and was flourishing two revolvers.

As quick as a flash, the young girl rose in her saddle, and raised one hand with an imperious gesture.

"Stop! Hold your fire!" she cried. "How dare you hinder our passage into the village, Mr. Banning?"

The Indians had grouped themselves around the pony instantly, and now waited sullenly for the official's answer.

"I ain't tryin' ter stop yer, Unitah!" said the man, promptly. "On ther contrary, me an' my men hev come ter see yer safe ter yer destination. All we want is that yer send back ther redskins."

"Why should I do that? They are my friends and acting as my escort. They will not do any harm in the village, sheriff!"

"See here, Unitah; it's our duty ter detain you now we've got ter, an' them chaps is likely ter hinder us from doin' our duty."

A sneer stole over the girl's beautiful features.

"There's no use, Lone Wolf," she said, turning to the nearest Indian. "The cowards have outnumbered you two to one! Perhaps I had better go on with the sheriff!"

She looked at the redskins gratefully as she spoke, for she had every reason to think well of them.

A growl from the savage was followed by a few guttural words.

"Me no leave Unitah! Me fight um palefaces!"

"No! no! Don't fight! Go home peacefully, Lone Wolf! Unitah will come back to you! She will steal away and run home to her friends! There isn't a sheriff in Wyoming that can hold her!"

"Enough of this! Send the savage dogs to their kennel, Unitah!" growled the sheriff. "I have something else to do than stay hyar all day! You've got ter come erlong an' go back ter yer people! Chase their Injuns, or my men will plug them full of lead!"

"Will they?" cried the girl, as she jerked a revolver from her belt. "I'll shoot the first man that dares to pull a trigger!"

A shout of alarm from the posse of men followed her words.

They were looking up the road, at a sight that might well have thrilled every one of them.

The Indians, turning, gave a warwhoop, and the next instant sent half-a-dozen bullets crashing into the ranks of the posse.

Their shots were instantly answered.

Two of the white men fell, while four of the redskins were biting the dust.

The other two Indians then engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle with their enemies.

The entire affair had lasted less than a minute, and the four combatants were still engaged, when two approaching horsemen, whose appearance on the brow of the hill had caused all the commotion, galloped up the road, and, taking in the situation at a glance, put spurs to their horses.

A bullet straight from two revolvers announced their arrival.

"Hands up, sheriff! Hands up, Pete Bangs and Tom Welles! Another move and you are all of you dead men!"

Sheriff Banning wheeled around and threw up both hands instantly.

He had recognized in the horsemen Jesse James and his brother Frank, the two most desperate bandits in the entire country.

The two cowboy miners, who were struggling with the Indians, shook themselves loose, and their hands promptly copied the action of the sheriff.

"Now, Frank, you look after the posse while I attend to this fellow!" ordered Jesse James, calmly. "Hang me if he wasn't on the point of stealing Unitah! No doubt the whelp thought he'd get the reward offered for his return by the county!"

"A mighty small figure for a man of the sheriff's size!" laughed Frank James, as he coolly turned his pistols upon the uninjured members of the posse.

Unitah had sprung from her broncho and was kneeling beside the dead.

ing by the Indians, whose steeds had scattered in all directions.

As she rose to her feet, her eyes flashed angrily.

"You shall suffer for this, Sheriff Banning!" she cried. "Your men have killed four of my loyal friends! If it takes me all my life, I will avenge them!"

Jesse James kept a bead on the sheriff, as he called out to the two uninjured Indians:

"The sheriff's horse is behind yonder boulder, Star Eye! Mount it and take Unitah back to the encampment! I will keep these fellows, so they cannot follow you!"

"Thank you, Jesse James! You have saved my liberty!" cried Unitah, earnestly. "I will return the favor some day! In time of trouble, depend upon Unitah!"

The great outlaw raised his slouch hat and made a graceful bow, then he kissed his fingers to the girl, without taking his eyes from the sheriff.

Star Eye had found the sheriff's horse, and another beside, and in a minute the two Indians were in the saddles.

Jesse James backed her close to Star Eye, and said a few words to him in his native language.

The Indian's beady eyes gleamed, and he grunted ap-knowingly.

Five minutes later Star Eye was galloping back over the hills, with the girl beside him.

"Now, you old coyote, get back to your nursery!" cried Jesse James to the sheriff, tauntingly. "It's lucky she came in time to spoil your fun! So you would send Unitah back to Pine Ridge, would you?"

"It's whar she belongs, Jesse James!"

"I'm not so sure! There's not a man, woman or child who can claim relationship to her, and the county only botrants her to be its servant!"

"There's five hundred dollars reward for her return, s anast ther same!"

"Which you will never get! Now, just drop that weapon, will you, and then lead your posse back! I witant to be going!"

The sheriff dropped his pistol in the road.

He did not dream of disobeying.

If he had ventured to refuse, a bullet from Jesse James' unerring hand would have crushed through his skull in about a second.

"Now, march, and don't one of you look behind!" ordered the outlaw. "I'll wait till you've turned the bend the road, and it's death to the man that looks over his stols oulder!"

Leaving his dead behind him, the sheriff turned obediently, and after him shuffled the balance of his se.

"Now, then, there's fun coming!" laughed Jesse James, as he watched them.

At that instant a party of horsemen came dashing around the bend.

As they nearly rode over the sheriff's party, they drew their weapons, but did not slacken speed a particle.

"Hello, sheriff! Good luck to you!" cried one of the riders.

His name was Bill Mason, and he was one of Jesse James' most faithful followers.

As he spoke, he raised a tin box that was before him on the saddle so that the sheriff could see it.

The man gasped with horror.

It was the strong box from his office, and in it were five thousand dollars in greenbacks that he had just received from the nearest bank, and which were intended for the erection of several public buildings.

The outlaws had entered and robbed his office while he was after Unitah.

Curses rose to his lips as he sprang into the hedge to escape the hoofs of the robbers' horses.

Then another sound smote upon his ears.

The inhabitants of Gold City were aroused and were chasing pell mell after the robbers.

They were coming fifty strong, mounted on powerful horses.

The sound inspired him with a degree of courage.

He looked back at the robbers.

Instantly, through the cloud of dust, came a deadly bullet.

Jesse James had kept his word.

The sheriff went down in a lifeless heap by the roadside.

As the posse saw it, they took to their heels, and did not stop running until the band of excited villagers came up to them.

By that time the robbers had joined Jesse James, and the whole group of bandits, accompanied by the Indians that remained, were clattering up the hillside.

As they disappeared, the detective, whose horse had fallen under him, and who had watched the whole proceedings from the bushes, sprang out.

A frightened mustang was floundering in a thicket near by, and he had only to lead him into the road and pick up the sheriff's pistol.

Then, snatching a blanket from one of the dead Indians, he vaulted to the saddle, wrapping the blanket around his head and body as he fairly bounded after the outlaws.

Taylor's face was as brown as a berry from exposure, and, as his buckskin breeches were not unlike the Indians', he would pass as a redskin with any casual observer.

Moreover, he was familiar with Indian traits and man-

ners, and could talk the language of the Utes as well as a native.

Bending low over the broncho's neck, he galloped on, feeling convinced that he could deceive the outlaws, who were apparently upon amicable terms with the Indians, since two of them were now riding with the bandits.

"They'll think I'm one of those dead bucks come to life," he chuckled, as he urged on his steed. "Or, perhaps, they'll think I'm an odd redskin that got lost in the shuffle."

A little spurt brought him in sight of the outlaws, who were riding hard, in order to keep out of range of whoever might be following.

Taylor did some rapid thinking as he suited his pace to theirs, and took an occasional backward glance over his shoulder.

The pursuing band had halted long enough to give him a start, and he was less concerned about them than about those whom he was pursuing.

Here was the very man he was after in plain sight of him at this minute, but the odds were decidedly in the outlaw's favor.

"If Higgins and Philips were only here now," he muttered. "It's just our luck to strike the trail within twenty-four hours after we divided forces."

He referred to two other detectives, who were his partners in the chase, but who had taken a different route, in the hope of heading off the bandit.

The outlaws were almost out of sight now, so he increased his speed, and, as he rounded a turn, he almost rode into them.

Without raising his head, he checked his steed almost upon the heels of one of the fellows.

Every man in the party turned in his saddle and looked at him, but, after a sharp glance, they went on with their conversation.

"What luck, boys?" were the first words, spoken by Jesse James, that the detective caught.

"Five thousand, in bills! It was every cussed thing thar wuz in ther place wuth stealin'!"

Jesse James chuckled audibly.

"That was one of our lucky hauls, Bill. If I hadn't spied that posse an hour ago, when I was reconnoitering on the bluff, I would never have thought of looting the sheriff's office. The old duffer was on a lay that he thought would bring him five hundred from the county, and it's turned out that the old fool has lost 'em five thousand!"

"And he didn't git ther gal, arter all!"

"You bet he didn't! But we must separate here! Those fellows are still after us!"

They had reached the summit of a knoll, and Jesse James was glancing behind him.

Taylor was lying across the saddle, as though asleep, and allowing his horse's bridle to hang loose from his fingers.

Jesse paid no attention to him, but sent his horse on his way across the hills.

He could see the band of horsemen in hot pursuit, and it was his idea to baffle them by dividing his force.

Five minutes later they were galloping over the hills in pairs.

Jesse James gave a final order before they parted.

"Have the box at the dugout in Roaring Cañon ready at midnight! There'll be more to divide by that time than thinking!"

Then he and his brother turned their horses' heads in a southerly direction, the detective following them a mile, and leaving them at a trail which led directly to the Indian encampment.

As they parted company, Jesse James called after him.

"Take better care of Unitah next time, you lawbreaker, or I'll have your scalp to dangle on a necklace!"

As the very next turn in the trail hid him from view, Taylor turned his horse and retraced his steps slowly.

The rest of the chase would be dangerous work, but having once gotten on the outlaw's track, it was the detective's nature to stop at anything.

Picking their way over trails that were nearly invisible, the outlaws rode for a distance of ten miles, without speaking.

The James gang had only been working in the West for about a month, but a series of train robberies and "hold-ups" had given them a degree of confidence.

Jesse James had his work cut out for many months to come, yet he had found time to capture five thousand dollars incidentally, one might say.

It was a peculiarity of his not to overlook any chances.

His fame just now was at its zenith, and his name alone helped him to many victories.

People fled, panic-stricken, whenever he appeared, except in places which he had previously visited, and where the natives watched day and night, with their eyes as sharp as a hawk's.

The best men from the great Pinkerton agency were being constantly sent out to track him to his den, but he was being tracked now, but nothing seemed to deter the fellow's daring.

He went and came as he pleased, usually leaving a long trail of blood behind him.

Such scenes as the one he had just witnessed were common in his career, and, before he dismounted his horse, he had almost forgotten it.

Arriving at the foot of a high bluff, the two outlaws scaled it.

They were sheltered by clumps of bushes from being seen, and the country stretched out before them in all its grandeur.

The detective's horse had given out a mile behind, so that, for the time, at least, they were monarchs of the situation.

Below them, not five miles distant, down the mountain side, was the Pine Ridge settlement.

As the outlaw brothers threw themselves upon the ground, the conversation turned in that direction.

It was to be the scene of the bandit king's next venture, and, as they discussed their plans, they drew a motley array of false beards, masks, etc., from their capacious pockets, and proceeded to make sundry changes in their toilets.

CHAPTER II.

A TALK BETWEEN THE OUTLAWS.

"How much is there in the Pine Ridge bank, Frank?"

"A paltry three thousand dollars."

"Who does it belong to?"

"The miners. The bank has four hundred depositors."

"Bah! I can't steal from beggars! How much is in the Nugget Company's store?"

"Ah! That's better picking! Carson, the manager of the company, has just received ten thousand dollars in gold. It's to go toward the new shaft and to pay off the miners."

"Then it's lucky we planned to come when we did. If we take this money the company will have to replace it. We'll have a look at Carson's strong box to-night! Do you know where he keeps it?"

"Yes, in his shanty. The place is a perfect arsenal. He's been expecting a visit from us ever since he came here!"

The two outlaws laughed softly.

"We have good men just now for the job, Jess!"

The outlaw scowled.

"They'll do! Bike Byson is all right, and so is Hawk. They're a nervy lot, take 'em all around, but they're not as good a gang as I had when I cleaned out this fellow Carson's predecessor. We made eight thousand in coined gold, and another five in nuggets."

"And old Ferguson, the president of the company, nearly had apoplexy over it! He bounced Peters the next day and hired this fellow!"

"Yes, and the people at the settlement haven't forgotten it!"

While this conversation was going on, Jesse had disguised himself as a typical ranchman, and Frank had

assumed the appearance of a tenderfoot cow puncher from Arizona.

"Well, we must be moving, Jess," said Frank, preparing to mount. "I told Hawk and One-Eyed Bill to meet us at Mike's cabin at noon. We'll need them both in the deal to-night."

"Yes. Now, remember, Frank, they are to make away with the stuff while you and I engage Carson and the president, for, of course, we'll find old Ferguson sitting on the money!"

"He'll watch in vain to-night! Tim Pyke, Carson's right-hand man, will be waiting with two horses in the shadow of the courthouse. They can transfer part of the stuff to him, and he'll take it to the dugout in Roaring Cañon."

"How about Mike, down at the cabin?" suddenly asked Frank. "Is he to be depended on? The fellow has been acting queerly lately."

Jesse shook his head, and a scowl crossed his brow.

"Mike's drinking too heavy, or something. The fellow has changed since that hold-up of the express on the Missouri Pacific. I guess I gave him a little too much money."

"And now he thinks you can't do without him."

"If I was sure he thought that, I'd find a way to deceive him!"

The outlaw's jaw set like stone as he spoke.

He had a way of taking the conceit out of his men when he thought they needed it.

His usual method was by putting a bullet through them.

Frank James drew his broad-brimmed hat down further over his eyes, and took a last look at the settlement below them.

From where they were standing, they could see it distinctly.

Instead of seeking the broad path that led down the mountain to the settlement, the two now mounted their horses and struck into a narrow trail that took them deeper and deeper into the heart of the mountains.

The place they were heading for was known as "Mike's cabin."

Who and what Mike was will soon be discovered.

They had been riding perhaps twenty minutes, when Jess suddenly exclaimed:

"Hello! Here's Mike now! What the deuce has happened?"

Both men pulled in their horses just as a curious figure leaped into the path ahead of them.

It was a man of forty, of gigantic stature, but with a very small head, and eyes that resembled a ferret's.

He had been a horse thief before the James boys found him.

After that, he joined in a dozen robberies of all sorts, and, upon one occasion, Jess had given him rather more than his share of the "divvy."

Then, as Mike had a bad wound in his foot, he allowed him to live quietly in his cabin, giving him the sole charge of a rope bridge over a dangerous chasm a short distance from the cabin.

This spot afterward became a rendezvous for the gang.

They met here to plot their villainies and divide their plunder.

Now, as the fellow landed directly before them, he held up one finger warningly.

Fleetwind, Jesse James' wonderful horse, snorted with fear as he approached.

The outlaw drew him down to his haunches.

At the same time, he bent his head to listen.

"Shure, they do be afther ye, Jess," said Mike, in a husky voice. "Ther be two on 'em now, Pinkerton men, ye kin gamble, an' waitin' fer ther loikes av ye in ther cabin, bad luck to 'em!"

"What the deuce do you mean!"

"It's ther truth I'm tellin' yez! Blasht ther hoides! They tuk me unawares as I wor cl'anin' me shanty, an' me not shure enough av ther identities to fade them wild-cats with 'em!"

Jesse James glared at the man.

In an instant the bandit king had grown suspicious.

"How did they get there, you Irish hound?" he roared.

"Who dropped the bridge over the gorge? Neither man nor beast could come that way if you did not help them! Own up, you whelp! You have turned traitor to your captain!"

The outlaw's face grew purple as he spoke.

He had allowed his frightful temper to blaze out in a second.

The Irishman crossed himself devoutly.

"May me soul lie in purgatory if I lifted ther finger av me to help ther sphalpeens!"

Jess turned in his saddle and looked in all directions.

There was nothing unusual to be seen upon the mountains.

He and his brother had been overlooking the path to the settlement for an hour.

If two men had arrived at the cabin, they had come from the interior of the mountains and over a chasm that was deemed impassable.

It was hardly possible that they could be detectives, as these fellows usually appeared from the direction of the railroad.

He turned to the Irishman again, slightly mollified in manner.

"What are they armed with?"

"Winchester rep'aters, and pistols in their belts.

They're sakin' skins, they tell me, catamounts, an' b'ars, an' ther loikes av sich crayturs."

"Have they horses?"

"Nary the sign av ther same."

"They may not be detectives, Jess!" said Frank. "They would never think of looking for you there."

"Detectives or not, I'll have a look at them!" roared the outlaw, as he started forward.

"Hang your obstinacy! You are worse than a government mule, Jess! It may only hinder our carrying out the robbery," he urged.

"Bah! It will do nothing of the sort! We'll go on to the cabin and take a look at the rascals. Give me your rifle, Mike! It will look more as if I was hunting! If you need a weapon, you can use your pistol!"

He motioned Mike out of his path after securing the rifle.

Then Mike received his orders from the bandit.

He was to lurk in the bushes that bordered the path, and allow no one to pass except Hawk and One Eye.

He disappeared at once, and the two brothers rode on.

"That will prevent a sheriff's posse from surprising us," remarked Jess.

Then he glanced back at the bush behind which Mike was hidden.

"There's treachery there! I feel it!"

"But Mike knows you too well for that! He knows what it means!"

Jesse muttered a curse, then rode forward in silence.

A moment later they were out of sight of the Irishman.

When the foliage had hidden them completely, something strange occurred.

Mike crept out into the path and shook his fist after them.

"Ther divil take ye, Jesse James! Shure, it's ther loikes av Mike Mulligan thet'll secure ther reward offered fer ye! Thin I'll be the captain av ther gang meself, if yer plaze, an' bad cess to thim as denies me author-r-ity!"

Mike had, indeed, been drinking too much!

The liquor had gone to his brain.

His sole ambition now was to kill Jesse James, claim the reward from the government, and install himself captain of the robbers.

It was a mad man's resolve, but Mike was, none the less, determined. He would even forego the reward to hold the coveted position.

CHAPTER III.

A SHOT IN THE BACK.

When the bandit brothers reached the clearing before the cabin, they found two men seated just outside of the log hut, both busily engaged in cleaning their rifles.

Jesse James pulled a pistol from his belt and snapped the trigger.

The rifle in the foremost man's hands was knocked out of his fingers by the unerring bullet.

"Howdy, strangers!" called the outlaw at the same time. "Hope I didn't skeer yer with thet thar bit o' pleasantry."

The fellow whose rifle had been knocked out of his hands leaned over calmly and picked it up.

"Naw! Yer didn't skeer us none! We heerd yer comin'," he said, coolly.

Jesse James glanced them over.

They were both brawny specimens of physical manhood.

They were dressed like hunters, and carried both pistols and rifles.

"I reckon now thet thar job is jest what we'd orter be er doin'," went on the outlaw, as he lowered a rifle from his shoulder. "Ther's big game erlong ther gorge, they say, an' we mout as well be ready fer it."

Both men looked up quickly as he lowered his weapon, but, when they saw he meant no harm, they went on with their cleaning.

"Thar's er few specimens, stranger," said one of the hunters, with a nod of his head toward a heap of game. "We bagged thet thar little hyena an' ther catamount in ther gorge, an' them two wildcats wuz in ther trees jest borderin' ther bluff over yender."

Jesse James turned the animals over with the toe of his boot.

"How'd yer cross ther gorge?" he asked, indifferently.

"Jumped it. How'd ye s'pose?" was the answer.

The outlaw turned and stared.

"Then yer must be ther champion long-distance jumpers of ther univarse," he said, coolly. "Why, thet thar piece of horseflesh of mine kin beat er kangaroo at jumpin', and I wouldn't want ter risk her neck or my own at thet thar gorge, young feller!"

The hunter stared back, coolly.

There was a grin on his face.

"Thet thar horse couldn't rig er springboard as we did, stranger! 'Tain't nothin' of er leap if yer know how ter do it."

Jesse James half closed his eyes, and a dangerous light shot out from between his lids.

"Yer kin hev ther medal," he said, grimly. "Yer not only ther champion jumper, but ther champion liar. Thar's nuthin' I like so much as er good yarn, stranger, an' thet one of yourn is sartinly er corker!"

The hunter smiled and went on rubbing his gun.

He did not exactly know how to take the accusation.

Jesse James leaned against his horse and watched them curiously.

The great outlaw was doing some rapid thinking.

"Where is thet thar Irishman?" said the other hunter, suddenly. "Ther feller went ter fetch er bundle of fagots, an' it looks as if he'd skun out fer some reason or tother."

"D'ye mean thet thar weasel-eyed hipperpotamus, with ther red shirt an' buckskins?" asked Frank James, as he slid down from his saddle. "If yer do, I kin tell yer right hyar he won't be back fer some time. We skeered ther wits out er ther coward, an' he's sneakin' red-hot fer ther settlement. I reckon now he thort we wuz bandits er somethin'."

The two hunters looked up again. They appeared to be a little frightened.

"Great snakes! Yer don't say!" said one of them, stuttering. "Why, I would er sed yer wuz er harmless cow puncher from ther foothills yender."

"An' whar in ther catagory of mankind would yer place me, stranger?" asked Jesse James, grimly.

He wanted to test the hunter's shrewdness.

The fellow finished loading his rifle, and raised it as he spoke.

"Bein' as how ye ask me, I'd say yer wuz from Arizona," he said, quickly, "an', by ther looks o' thet thar bit of horseflesh yonder, I'd say yer knew er thing er two erbout stock-raisin'."

The bandit king laughed.

This was just what he wanted.

He was safe so long as he was mistaken for a ranchman from Arizona.

It was the hunter's turn to ask a question, but before he did so he tossed a chip into the air and split it with a bullet from his rifle.

As the two pieces were falling, he jerked a revolver from his belt.

The two pieces fell to the ground shivered into atoms.

Jesse James looked on critically at this bit of marksmanship.

When it was over, he patted his horse's neck soothingly.

"I reckon, now, you air purty smart at guessin' yerself, stranger," said the marksman, indifferently. "It mout be agreeable ter ther rest ter hear yer opinyun of us fellers."

Jesse took a chew of tobacco, while he leisurely sized up his men.

Then he laid one hand on the revolver that stuck out of his pocket.

"Yer compliments air ondesarved, stranger," he began. "I ain't seen ernuff freaks ter be able ter name all on 'em, but jest as er rough guess, I'd say, now, yer wuz Pinkerton detectives, an' yer errand hyar is ter rid ther Rockies of ther prince of desperadoes."

There was a twinkle in his eye as he spoke the words.

If a bomb had fallen in front of them, the two hunters would hardly have looked more astonished.

Then one of them recovered himself, and burst into a loud laugh.

In spite of the clever acting, Jesse James had guessed the truth.

That one second of dismay had proven to his keen mind that the two hunters were detectives.

At that moment two more figures appeared in the clearing.

Jesse James smiled grimly to himself as he thought of the trap the detectives were in.

Whether they knew him or not would not make any difference.

He had only to make a signal, and the two sleuths would be riddled with bullets.

But that was not always his way of doing business.

He was like a cat playing with a mouse in his treatment of detectives.

Of course, these two men were after the reward of ten thousand dollars which had been offered for his capture.

From two to a dozen of them were on his track all the time.

The outlaw turned to the newcomers with an insolent stare.

He did not betray the fact that he knew them.

"Hello! Who ther devil be you? 'Pears like we're goin' ter hev er biz'ness meetin' of some sort!" he said, coolly, as he winked at one of them. "It's er pity, now, that we skeered ther hipperpotamus! Ther little-eyed feller mout er showed us some refreshments."

He stroked his horse as he spoke, but kept his eyes on the detectives.

He was watching like a hawk to see them signal each other.

Frank James had stepped inside the cabin door a minute before, and now one of the detectives leaned idly against the entrance.

"Humph! Watching us like cats," thought Jesse, as he saw it.

Then he went on with his talk, in the hope of prolonging what he considered a period of amusement.

"Whar d'ye come from, you two?" he asked of the newcomers. "Quare we didn't see yer afore. We jest come over ther Chalk Line trail from Roarin' Cañon, an' lowed we'd take er look at ther game on this hyar side of ther mountain."

"We come ther t'other way," answered the fellow, who was known as "One-Eyed Bill."

He was one of Jesse James' own gang, and as brutal and ferocious as any member of the organization.

The other member of the party was a half-breed Indian by the name of Hawk.

He had a face as black as the ace of spades, and vision like an eagle's.

Hawk threw himself upon the ground as soon as he reached the clearing, and lay there, fingering his pistol.

Frank James came out of the cabin, almost rubbing his elbows with the detective.

"Thar ain't no grub in thet thar place, except er hunder venison an' er half er roasted 'possum. We'll chut a coin fer ther banquet, strangers. Ther ain't ernuff fer us."

"Yer kin count me out. I ain't hungry," said one of the detectives; "but ef any one hez got er nip of fire water, I ain't ther one ter refuse ter drink with him."

Jesse James pulled a flask from his pocket instantly.

It was a rich silver affair that his wife had given him.

The moment he handed it out, he saw the detective glance at it.

A grim smile overspread his face.

"It's er purty trinket, stranger," he said, dryly. "I'm glad yer like it. Ther thing is er soovernier of er time in these parts in ther seventies."

The detective raised the flask to his lips, but barely tasted the liquor.

As he lowered it, he glanced at the outlaw, as if waiting for the story.

"I reckon, now, there's somethin' more in ther share of grub in ther cabin sullar," broke in "One-Eye" in that second.

He had caught a look from Jesse James while the detective was drinking.

The second detective still guarded the door.

If one of the men went inside, the action would be fatal.

"Ef thet thar's ther case, you'd better do ther honor an' trot it out," said Jesse, promptly. "Ther idee of thet thar shanty havin' er sullar never popped inter my head. Now, who in thunder would er beleaved thet ranch wuz er double-decker?"

He stared past the first detective as he spoke, and seemed inspecting the shanty.

Hawk's hand was still on his weapon, and he was leaning upon one elbow. Frank James was in a position to storm the door of the shanty.

If One Eye could succeed in getting inside, both of the detectives would be covered from all directions.

They felt this instinctively.

It had dawned upon them slowly that these four men were outlaws.

There was no doubt in their minds that they belonged to the Jesse James gang; in fact, they had expected to surprise a party of Jesse's friends at the cabin, but it had not yet occurred to them that they were talking with the famous outlaws.

What they knew was that they were in the presence of four desperate men, who would shoot them down like dogs if they but suspected their errand.

Jesse James moved a little, so as to be at a distance from his horse.

It was the final act that showed the detectives that trouble was coming.

The two brave fellows still held their rifles in one hand.

It would take but the fraction of a second to raise them to their shoulders.

In the meantime, they could pull a pistol with the other hand.

It was a trick that could not be outdone by any sharpshooter in the Rockies.

A moment's silence had fallen upon the little group.

One Eye moved toward the door.

The detective planted himself carelessly before it.

A flush of anger mounted to the brow of Jesse James.

This movement on the part of the detective precipitated the battle.

Jesse jerked two pistols from his belt, discharging them both at the nearest detective.

At the same time he yelled to the others:

"Charge! At 'em, boys! Riddle the sneaking rascals!"

A volley of shots followed.

There was not a breath of intermission.

A second later the scene in front of the cottage had changed like magic.

The detective who had guarded the door lay dead across the sill.

One Eye was breathing his last.

Hawk was groaning in agony.

Frank James had a bullet hole in his wrist, from which the blood was oozing.

Ignoring this, he bent over Jesse, who was lying, face down, upon the ground.

The detective who had taken the drink assisted him as he attempted to raise his brother.

There was a brief examination; then the two men stared at each other.

"Jess has had a close call. But how in thunder did it happen? That bullet struck him in the back, and you were twenty feet in front of him," said Frank, quickly.

The detective jumped.

"Is he Jesse James?"

"Sure! Who the devil did you think he was?"

CHAPTER IV.

THE ESCAPE.

The detective did not stay to answer his question.

Jesse James was leaning heavily upon his brother as the detective sprang out to the nearest horse and dashed out of the clearing.

A bullet from Frank's revolver followed him, but it did no damage.

Five minutes later he was galloping down the mountain side on a mad race to the Pine Ridge settlement.

He was headed straight for the sheriff's office.

Frank James had his hands full for the first ten minutes after the battle.

In that time Jesse had revived enough to hear the account of his injuries.

"The detectives' bullets never touched you, Jess. You got a plunk in the back that knocked you over. The bullet struck your belt and glanced off to the right. It's ploughed a furrow across your side, but it don't amount to anything."

"Where is he? Where is the cursed detective?" roared Jesse.

"Gone! And took my horse with him, hang him!" growled Frank.

Hawk was crawling to his feet, so, as soon as Jesse's wound was bandaged, Frank gave him some attention.

He stanchd the flow of blood from his own wound by tying a handkerchief around it.

Jesse raged like a mad bull.

His curses were all directed toward his hidden antagonist.

It was plain that an enemy had been lurking in the bushes, and immediately the outlaw became suspicious of the owner of the cabin.

He was sure that Mike had fired that coward's shot.

Jesse grew purple in the face with rage, and his fingers itched to get hold of the fellow.

Hawk was able to walk in a little while, and Jesse James was ready with his orders as soon as their wounds were all attended to.

"Drag the bodies inside of the cabin and leave them," he said, savagely; "then get after Mike, curse him! I'll fill his hide with bullets and feed him to the wolves!"

"The fellow tried to kill you, Jess! The traitor! An inch higher would have done it, too!"

Hawk looked around behind the most conspicuous hiding places.

"He's probably half a mile from here by this time," said Frank. "He's a regular jack rabbit at jumping through bushes."

"We'll find him before I sleep!" roared Jesse James. "But come on! We must get to the gorge! That detective cur will set a posse after us! We'll be safe only

when we've crossed the gorge and the bridge is up behind us!"

He sprang on his horse as steadily as though he was not injured, although the wound in his back was paining him severely.

Hawk crept into the bushes on one side of the trail and Frank on the other.

Then began the journey to the hidden bridge.

Once across this frail structure, they feared no posse in creation.

The question was, how to get the horse over it.

Fleetwind was a magnificent jumper, but the gorge was beyond her utmost ability.

"We'll have to hide her somewhere and take chances," thought Jesse, as he pondered the situation.

A bullet whizzing by his ear cut short his reflections.

"They're after us! Run for it!" he cried, softly, without even glancing behind.

Fleetwind dashed ahead.

A chorus of shouts followed her.

Jesse James knew at once that they came from a sheriff's posse.

Some one had set them on his track, he knew not who, for the detective had not had time to reach the settlement.

As he dashed down the mountain side, he swore to get even.

Faster and faster went the wonderful horse.

Jesse had left his men behind him, still hidden in the bushes.

Whether they escaped or not did not matter to him then.

He ground his teeth like a madman, and urged Fleetwind forward.

Bullets whistled by his ears at intervals, and at last he glanced over his shoulder.

A group of horsemen were in his wake.

They yelled at him to stop, but he only tore the broad-brimmed hat from his head and waved it defiantly.

The decline to the gorge was growing steeper at every step, but Fleetwind knew the way.

She neither swerved nor stumbled.

Somewhere below them the steep hill ended suddenly with a monstrous ledge of rock.

A chasm fifty feet deep intervened between this and the neighboring precipice.

It was across this chasm that he must escape from his pursuers.

A sudden turn among the stunted trees and underbrush hid him for a moment.

Fleetwind stopped at a word.

Jesse James sprang from her back.

Parting a thick growth of underbrush, he led the noble animal through it.

On the other side was a monstrous fallen tree trunk. The horse laid down behind it as meekly as a kitten. Then the outlaw retraced his footsteps.

It had only taken a minute.

He could hear the crackling of the bushes and the yelling of the horsemen.

No doubt they thought that his momentary disappearance meant that his horse had stumbled.

He smiled grimly as he left the beaten path and made his way through the bushes.

They would see him in a minute, and his life would again be in danger.

He must expose himself in full view before he could reach the hidden bridge and cross the chasm.

It took just such daredevil fearlessness as his to risk such a venture.

With a derisive yell, he bounded out of the bushes and made a break for a stunted tree that grew exactly upon the edge of the chasm.

A dozen shouts answered his and a dozen pistols cracked merrily.

In a shower of leaden hail, Jesse James looked around him.

Just as he expected, the bridge of rope was stretched across the chasm.

It was proof positive that Mike had aided the detectives in their efforts to reach the cabin.

Almost forgetting his own danger, he began cursing the man who had betrayed him.

A second later he was on the rope bridge, which swayed and bent beneath his weight.

He added recklessness to fearlessness.

He turned about and walked backward.

The sheriff's posse had nearly reached the edge of the chasm.

They were gazing at him in wonder, and their horses were rearing with fright, as they beheld the chasm at their feet.

This affected their aim and saved the outlaw's life.

He swung his hat around his head and yelled back at them, tauntingly.

Six steps remained between him and the opposite brink of the precipice, when a horseman suddenly shot out ahead of the rest of the posse.

Jesse recognized him instantly.

It was Dick Tracy, "the gentleman cowboy," as he was called.

The fellow was the finest shot in the Rockies; besides, his horse was a thoroughbred; it would not disturb his aim by unnecessary jumping.

The outlaw's pistols were out like a flash.

Crack!

Crack!

Dick Tracy's horse dropped like a log beneath him.

The cowboy bounded over its head, and his pistol spoke sharply.

"Curse you, Jesse James!" he roared. "You shall die for that, you scoundrel!"

A mocking laugh came back to him.

He had missed the outlaw's head by a hair's breadth.

The crown of his low, broad hat was pierced by both bullets.

Shot after shot rang out.

The outlaw's escape seemed a miracle.

Bullets grazed his shoulders, and even cut off locks of his long hair, yet he stepped backward over the rope bridge without a tremor.

Then a yell from the sheriff himself sounded between the pistol shots.

"Quick! Cut the bridge down, Dick! That'll settle the ruffian!"

Dick Tracy drew a knife from his belt and dashed to the edge of the chasm with it flashing in his hand.

Jesse reached the opposite bank, and was obliged to turn for a second.

Rip went the knife across the strands of the rope.

It was knotted to the stunted tree trunk, and it would take a number of strokes to sever it.

Jesse caught the ragged edge of the rocks with his hands.

The knife slashed again, and the rope strands parted.

There was an exulting cry from the sheriff's posse.

"Hurrah! Down with the Bandit King! Let him drop into the chasm!"

The ropes had fallen from beneath his feet, but still Jesse clung to the boulders.

A dozen weapons were leveled at his head.

Jesse James was never nearer death than he was at this minute.

"Crack! Crack! Crack," went three more revolvers, but this time the bullets were aimed directly at the posse.

The leaden missiles came from behind their backs, and, as two of the men fell, the others wheeled around to see who had fired the shots.

There was no one in sight, yet "Crack! Crack!" went a couple more deadly weapons.

Two more bullets had found a lodging place, one in the neck of a miner's horse, and the other in the miner himself, who let out a yell of pain.

"Quick! Fire, men! The rascals are skulking in the bushes yonder!" roared Dick Tracy; at the same time he emptied the contents of his revolver at a clump of rugged bushes.

The men followed his example.

As they did so, Jesse James drew himself up to the edge of the bank and disappeared behind a clump of cedars that grew on the brink of the chasm.

The Pinkerton man, who had met the posse half-way from the settlement, gnashed his teeth in rage.

His weapons were empty, and he had no more cartridges.

Besides, his horse was acting as if it were possessed by a demon.

He had all he could do to keep it from plunging over the precipice.

Jesse James had escaped again.

When the men discovered this, they all made a dash for the bushes.

They forced their horses into them in every direction, but there was nothing to be seen of their hidden enemies.

"You can bet it is Frank James! He is usually with his brother!" roared Tracy. "After him, men! He is the second biggest rascal in the country!"

The detective joined in the search, but it was of no avail.

Whoever had fired the shots had glided away through the bushes, where not even a mountain-bred horse could follow.

"There is no use wasting any more time! The rascals have escaped us!" said the sheriff, angrily. "Come on, men! We will go back! We are needed at the settlement. Who knows but what some of the outlaw gang have visited it in our absence?"

They mounted the hill sullenly, with the sheriff in the lead, and as they rode along through the bushes, the detective brought his horse to order and got second in the line, with Tracy behind him. Then they advanced up the hill toward Mike's cabin.

"It's a cursed shame we lost him! I thought we had him sure when the bridge gave way," he remarked.

"So did I," growled the sheriff. "I can't understand the fellow's luck."

"Tod Welles swears that Jess shot Sheriff Banning down in cold blood this morning," broke in Tracy. "The sheriff was out with a posse, trying to capture Unitah. You know, our county offered five hundred dollars for her return to the settlement."

"And Banning wanted the money! The poor devil hadn't a very fat job in Blue City," laughed Sheriff Carson. "Well, I, for one, don't blame the girl. She's had better treatment among the Injuns than she got at the settlement, after the miners' wives got to roasting her mother."

"Jesse James is the last man on earth to protect a woman, I should say," said the detective.

"He's never been known to harm one. Jess is devoted to his wife, and is a good son to his mother."

"Hello! Who's that?" roared Tracy at that minute.

A lone horseman had suddenly appeared directly in their path. He seemed to be picking his way carefully down the side of the mountain, midway between Mike's cabin and the gorge.

Every man in the lot had his revolver cocked in a second. Then Higgins, the detective, recognized the fellow.

"Hold on, men! Don't shoot! That is a friend of mine! He's a Pinkerton man, and he's after Jesse James, also!"

CHAPTER V.

THE FIRE.

The men dropped their weapons instantly, and Higgins crowded his horse past Carson's.

"Hello, Taylor, old man! Glad to see you!" he shouted.

The newcomer jerked off his hat and swung it around his head. At the same time he pulled his horse around broadside across the trail.

"By ginger! I'm glad to find you, Higgins! I thought sure we'd missed connections somewhere, but what in thunder has become of Philips?"

"Dead! Jesse James shot him up yonder at the cabin, and the fiend has escaped us, red-handed, across the chasm!"

"You don't say so! That's hard luck! Too bad I did not come with you fellows direct! I've had a deuce of a time chasing those ruffians over the mountains!"

"Which way did you come?"

"Over the Chalk Line trail. I witnessed the shooting of Sheriff Banning this morning. I was hiding in the bushes, armed with an empty pistol."

"The devil! How did that happen?"

Taylor explained the accident that had crippled him and the difficulties he had experienced in trailing the outlaws.

Meanwhile the posse climbed the hill leisurely. Taylor was now in the lead, and all kept their eyes peeled for kulkers in the bushes. Several of the men were injured and had to ride slowly, and two of the horses were carrying each a dead body.

It was a sorry spectacle, but by no means an unusual one, for sheriffs and their men were always handled pretty roughly by the outlaws.

After the two detectives had compared notes, Higgins turned to Tracy and asked him a few questions about the girl Unitah.

"The girl's mother was a beauty," said the cowboy. She came to the settlement eighteen years ago. I was only a boy, but I remember how she looked perfectly."

"A Western woman?"

"No. She hailed from the East. Her husband was a prospector. They quarreled day and night, according to the neighbors, and their quarrels were always about the woman's character."

"The fellow was jealous?"

"Yes. He murdered her one night, when the child was ten years old. The next morning he was lynched by Jesse James and his gang of cutthroats."

The two detectives whistled.

"That served him right," said Higgins.

"That's more'n any of us know. Anyhow, Unitah was scoffed at by the miners' wives, until a couple of years ago she quit the settlement."

"Ran away, you mean?"

"Yes. Lit out in the night."

"Where the deuce did she go?"

"To a settlement of Injuns over between the hills, about six miles from Gold City. They are friendly Utes, and they've taken good care of her. The redskins worship her as they do the Great Spirit."

"It's a wonder she hasn't married one of the bucks."

"Not she! Unitah is a queen among them. Even the squaws worship her, and don't seem to be jealous."

"A wonderful girl, surely."

Sheriff Carson shook his head.

"The miners at the settlement have a little something to answer for in that direction, I reckon, but I'm more interested in Jesse James than I am in Unitah."

"How did you happen to be after him to-day?" asked Higgins, who had met the posse on the way to the settlement, and who had at that time simply learned that the sheriff was after Jesse James.

"Tod Welles, one of the fellows in the fracas, rode over and told us, but he didn't say a word about seeing a detective," said Tracy.

"You bet he didn't! I wasn't visible until after the coast was clear," laughed Taylor. "After that I had my hands full to follow the outlaws."

"And we surmised that Jess was headed for Mike's cabin," went on the sheriff. "We've been suspicious of the place for some time, and I thought 'twas a good time to investigate."

They reached the clearing where stood the cabin as they spoke, and all hands dismounted, except two horsemen that the sheriff sent on to the settlement with the bodies.

Higgins walked up and tried the door of the cabin, while Sheriff Carson glanced around at the signs of the recent struggle.

"You saw your friend shot down, did you?" he asked, turning to the detective.

"I did, indeed," said Higgins. "He put a bullet through a one-eyed man who drew a bead on him. The

next second my friend was down, and I was dodging Jesse James' lead. Little did I dream, though, that it was the bandit king who was making a target of me."

"And you say Jess was shot in the back?"

"Yes. Some one fired at him from the bushes."

"It must have been one of my miners."

"I doubt it. I think it was the fellow they call Mike. He hated Jesse James. It was he who helped us over the chasm."

The sheriff whistled, for this was news, indeed.

It gave him a different idea of the owner of the cabin.

At that minute Taylor put his shoulder against the cabin door, which fell with a crash, and disclosed the two bodies.

The sheriff viewed them.

They were both shot through the heart.

He was obliged to leave them in the cabin for the present.

After this they searched the place, but there was nothing of value to be found, except a lot of black masks and a dozen dark lanterns.

After the search the sheriff headed for the settlement. Dick Tracy and the two detectives following him.

Half an hour later Frank James and Hawk crept up the hill to the clearing, looking much the worse for wear from their long scramble through the bushes.

"Foiled again!" chuckled Frank, peering cautiously around the clearing. "Great snakes! It was luck for Jess that we got there just as we did, Hawk!"

The half-breed grinned as he shook some of the dirt out of his clothing.

"Now, then, we've got to make tracks from here, and right quick, too! They'll have spies watching this place, and, besides, Mike is somewhere in the bushes. Suppose we have a bite of that venison and consider what is next on the programme."

They moved toward the cabin.

As they did so, Mike pushed the bushes aside, and his weasel eyes glared at them.

He had been dodging here and there ever since he fired the shot at Jesse James, and had been taking frequent drinks from the flask of whisky in his pocket.

As Frank disappeared in the cabin, he stole a little nearer.

There were two pistols in his belt, and any quantity of cartridges, so that, if he had desired, he could have shot down his companions easily, as they emerged from the cabin.

But it was not Frank James that he was after.

It was the Bandit King he fancied stood in the way of his ambition.

He chose a particularly thick clump of bushes near

the edge of the clearing and waited, hoping that Jesse would come back to the cabin.

But a half hour passed, and the outlaw did not return.

Then Frank James and Hawk quitted the cabin and began retracing their steps down the mountain toward the gorge.

Frank was growling something about the sheriff, and passed, without so much as dreaming that a madman's eye was upon him.

"Hang it! This infernal mess will spoil our chances for this evening! The whole settlement will be up in arms, and the sheriff will have a double guard around that gold, you may depend upon it."

"Jess won't never do ther job ter-night. He'll wait," answered Hawk.

"You don't know Jess. He'll be red-hot to get into the thick of it. I wonder, now, what he's done with Fleetwind."

They were making their way back down the trail as they talked, and noting the traces of blood that were here and there on the bushes.

"We winged some on 'em, Frank," said Hawk, still grinning. "I hope it wuz ther sneakin' detective."

"That fellow will be in the racket to-night if we didn't, and I'd rather fight a whole posse than one clever detective," was the answer.

They hurried on, keeping a sharp lookout over the bushes, and, just as they reached the spot where Fleetwind was hidden, the horse lifted her head and whinnied.

Hawk darted into the bushes, returning with the horse, still saddled.

Fleetwind arched her neck and showed her pleasure at being released from her cramped position.

Five minutes later they reached the brink of the chasm, Frank leading the horse by the bridle.

Jess was on the opposite side, calmly examining the injured ladder.

"Hello, Jess!"

The greeting was roared across the chasm, accompanied with a burst of laughter.

Jesse James waved his hand, and then burst into violent cursing.

"How the devil will I get back? That's what I want to know. It is ten miles around the hills, and my back's in bad shape."

Frank glanced around.

He was looking for vines that would be strong enough for his purpose.

Jesse did the same, and succeeded in finding some.

He wove them into the rungs cleverly, and lengthened the ladder like a bridge, until it would again span the chasm.

Then, tying a stone to the end, he hurled it across the gorge.

Hawk caught it the first time, and made the ladder fast in its original position.

Then the famous outlaw trusted his life to the frail structure. Half-way across his body teetered a little.

He raised one arm to preserve his balance, and, as he did so he called out, carelessly, to his brother:

"Put a bullet into me if I drop, Frank. It will be pleasanter landing down below on the stones if you don't know anything about it."

Frank James drew a pistol from his belt and cocked it. If his brother's body had left the frail bridge, he would have sent his soul to eternity.

No touch of sentiment would have permitted his aim to falter.

As soon as they were together, Frank told his part of the performance, and Jesse James chuckled with pleasure as he walked back up the trail, leading his horse.

Neither one of the outlaws knew that another detective had joined the party. This was a detail that Frank and Hawk had both failed to observe, for, when Taylor arrived on the scene, they were lying, face down, behind some boulders, at a considerable distance.

"Those cursed miners will be hotter after your scalp than ever now, Jess," said Frank.

"Let them take it, if they can," was the outlaw's answer.

"Then you expect to go on with the deal to-night?"

"Certainly I do! By thunder! Did you suppose this little by-play would stop me? I've got other work cut out for to-morrow night, and I'm not going to leave this part of the country without a souvenir of my visit!"

"The settlement will be laying for you from one end to the other."

"Let them! I'll trick them once more, just to show them that I can do it! I'll have that gold to-night! A dozen sheriffs can't stop me! Curse Carson and his slaves! There'll be a shortage in their numbers to-morrow!"

"And the detective?"

"We'll catch the cur alive, if we can," was the answer. "It's been some time now since we've had a Pinkerton man in our clutches."

He was a cold, calculating outlaw.

"It will be the toughest job of your life, Jess," Frank said, warningly.

"So much the better! I'm hankering for a tough job! That one this morning at Gold City was too easy."

"Then, One Eye must be replaced at once."

"Yes. Hawk can go for Bill Mason and Blue Water. He'll find them somewhere in the vicinity of the Black Hawk cavern."

They were almost up the hill, and Fleetwind crackling through the bushes.

"Go easy, Jess. We're nearing the cabin. It's possible the sheriff came back and is in there with sharpshooters."

"I'll settle with him, if he is," growled Jesse James, stopping short and emptying a small horn of powder in his handkerchief and tying the four corners.

Letting go of the mare's bridle, he stole forward the edge of the clearing, but keeping his body covered the bushes. When he was within a stone's throw of the shanty, he swung the bag of powder around his head and then hurled it forward.

It landed in a chink between the logs of the cabin roof.

A moment later a blazing brand followed it, the outlaw's aim being so precise that the burning fagot fell directly upon the powder.

There was an instantaneous blaze, and in a minute the roof of the cabin was on fire.

The outlaws stood calmly by and saw the entire structure burned to a cinder.

The clearing around the cabin prevented the fire from spreading.

When nothing but a charred heap remained, they moved carefully forward to see if there was anything left of the two bodies.

As Jesse James strode into full view, a pistol cracked in the bushes, and a bullet whistled by his ear and struck a rock behind the burning ruins.

He wheeled like a flash, but Hawk had already darted into the bushes, and in an instant a great cursing and crashing followed.

Then the half-breed backed out, dragging Mike behind him.

The Irishman was frothing at the mouth and kicking like a mule, but he had met his match, and was soon relieved of his weapons.

Jesse James looked on with a cruel smile upon his face until Mike's wrists and ankles were firmly bound together and his body lashed to a sapling.

"Now, then, we'll give you the medicine that we give to all traitors," said the Bandit King, sternly.

He raised his pistol as he spoke.

"One."

"Two."

"Three."

"Four."

As they counted, each of the outlaw brothers discharged his weapon twice, and the Irishman's legs and arms were riddled with bullets.

Then Jesse James emptied his revolver straight at the fellow's heart.

Mike's body sagged in its bonds and hung forward limply.

"Now, then, let's get away from here, and be quick about it," said Jesse, sharply.

He mounted Fleetwind as he spoke, and five minutes later the wonderful horse was picking her way back over the treacherous mountain trails, while Frank and Hawk skulked away on secret errands.

Mike's body remained as they left it until it was found by the sheriff's men later, when it was carried away on the litter intended for the detective.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ROBBERY.

When the outlaw brothers next met, they wore different disguises.

They had on regular hunting jackets and enormous cartridge belts, and both were armed to the teeth with knives and pistols.

They were seated upon fresh horses, in the shadow of the courthouse in the Pine Ridge settlement, and the moon showed that it was bordering on the hour of midnight.

The settlement was located in the "Black Hills" of Wyoming, about ten miles from the railroad.

The place had a prosperous air, and was almost a village.

The principal buildings were the frame church and a schoolhouse, which stood side by side with a jail and courthouse.

The residences were nearly all log cabins, packed closely together. Some were more neatly built than others, with an artistic attempt at architecture.

Nearly six hundred miners lived here, with their wives and families.

Besides the cabins, there were numerous saloons, and here and there a Chinese laundry sign was displayed.

Over them all ruled Herbert Ferguson, the president of the mining company, whose capital and enterprise had founded the settlement.

He was a crusty old fellow, who constituted himself both judge and jury of the people.

He held the saloon-keepers in check and imposed fines for gambling.

His word was the law of the Pine Ridge settlement, and Thomas Carson was his able representative.

The manager of the mine was also the sheriff of the amounty, which meant that, between them, they about ran things to suit them.

Mr. Ferguson lived in a frame house a short distance from the courthouse. His household consisted of one daughter and three Chinese servants.

Mr. Carson lived near him in one of the best log cabins. Between them was the company's store, which was also a frame building.

In the rear of Carson's cabin was a sort of "dugout."

This was an excavation in the gigantic rocks which formed a background for the settlement.

As the James boys sat there by the courthouse on their horses, two more outlaws galloped up.

They were Bill Mason and Hawk, both mounted upon magnificent stallions.

Bike Byson and Bluewater, another surly half-breed, were stationed near Mr. Ferguson's house to prevent any assistance coming from that quarter, while an outlaw by the name of Dilkes was on a still hunt for the detective.

"Now, it won't do for us to be seen together a minute," said Jesse James, as he adjusted a black mask over his features, "so Frank and I will go straight to Carson's cabin and you fellows must follow in about five minutes."

"The sheriff is on ther lookout, Jesse," said Mason, softly.

"Of course, he'd be a fool if he wasn't! What of it, Mason?"

"Nuthin'. I jest wanted yer ter know. He's got two of ther company's men besides ther bookkeeper with him."

"A trio of greenhorns! One load will finish the lot of them!"

"There's mounted men in every dark corner, Jess. I've counted er dozen sence I struck ther settlement!"

"A bullet apiece will settle the batch! I'll pay well for scalps, so let me have my fill of them!"

Jesse turned his horse's head as he spoke.

"Where's Pyke?" asked Frank, in a whisper.

"He's waiting just around the other side of the building. By the way, has any one seen old Ferguson's daughter?"

The sound of horse's hoofs coming down the narrow street made the men shrink back into the shadow without answering.

It was the very young woman whose name he had mentioned.

She dashed by on a powerful steed, looking like a spectre in the moonlight.

"Holy smokes! what a horsewoman!" muttered Jesse James, admiringly. "Now where is the girl going to, I wonder?"

Frank gave him a sharp look, for he was growing suspicious.

He knew it would not be unlike Jess to work two games that evening, inasmuch as he had spoken of stealing Ferguson's daughter.

"She's darin' ter come out er night like this, when ther settlement is red-hot," said Mason.

"Tracy'll keep an eye on her, no doubt, and, besides,

she's a fighter from way back! Ten to one we'll have a woman in our path before we kin git our clutches on that thar hoodle, Jess."

"I don't think you'll see her again," said Jesse James, dryly, and, as he spoke, there was another clatter of hoofs and two riders passed them in the darkness.

"Injuns!" whispered Mason, under his breath. "What the deuce are they doin'? I'll bet they're chasin' thet thar gal, Jess!"

"Let 'em chase her," growled the outlaw, but he was chuckling inwardly.

There was another effort to move out of the shadows, but the same sound made them hold their breath and peer forward eagerly.

The last rider was Dick Tracy, and he was going like a whirlwind. They could see the whiteness of his face as he crossed a patch of moonlight. Frank's hand flew to his pistol, but a word from Jesse restrained him.

"Stop! Do you want to queer the deal? Let him chase the redskins! We'll have easier work at the sheriff's if we are clear of Dick Tracy!"

"A bullet through his heart would rid you of an enemy," said Mason at that minute.

"Bosh! What does an enemy more or less mean to me! My hand is against every man, as every man's hand is against me."

"You have a few good friends, Jess. The women like you," laughed his brother.

"Bosh! Any man with courage in his heart and down on his upper lip can win the love of a woman. But we must be off, the time is pressing."

"Wait! There goes a detective!"

A long shrill whistle down the street had sounded and had been promptly answered by another, then the hoof beats of two horses died out in the distance.

"Dilkes is after him," muttered Jesse James.

"Now if the Indians and Dilkes do their duty, the coast is pretty clear. We can wipe out the rest of 'em!"

They stole out from under the shadows of the narrow village street.

It was only a stone's throw to Carson's cabin, behind which the money they were after was stored.

Jesse James reined his horse close to the building so that he could command a view of the two upper front windows.

Frank was twenty paces from him on a range with the lower windows.

As they scanned the unlighted cabin closely the loud clatter of hoofs was heard.

"Quick! The natives are after us!" he said in a whisper. "Shall we run for it, Jess, or stay and defy them?"

Jesse James put his fingers to his lips and gave a long, shrill whistle.

The horsemen were coming nearer, and seemed to swelling in number.

Then the two windows flew open and a rifle barrel protruded from each.

"We are ready for you, Jesse James!" called out Sheriff Carson's voice.

"Then, d— you! You shall open your doors to us roared the outlaw, furiously.

At the same time, he fired a volley from two pistols once, aiming the weapons at the two windows which he was able to cover.

A cry of pain from some one showed that one of his bullets had hit the mark.

He had just time to turn in his saddle for a glance down the street, when a perfect shower of leaden hail began cutting the air around him.

Then the sheriff himself gave three sharp whistles.

Frank James was making himself heard conspicuously now.

Following his brother's example, he had opened fire with both pistols.

Jesse moved farther into the shadow and blazed away.

He had noticed that the sheriff's signal was not yet answered.

A fierce battle was taking place somewhere up the street.

In the intervals of his own racket, he could hear pistols cracking and Indians yelling.

It needed no great shrewdness to appreciate the situation.

He knew that the Indians had been headed off by some of the cowboys, and that his two men, Hawk and Mason, had gone to the rescue, and, possibly, Bike and Bluewater were also in the scrimmage.

There was not much opportunity for him to speculate on the result just now, as he was busy returning the sheriff's bullets.

A minute later he was reinforced by Hawk.

The half-breed had secured an old blunderbuss, which he fired point-blank at the window.

A howl of pain was followed by a loud report.

The charge had struck a loaded gun, and the weapon exploded in the hands of its owner.

The next second Hawk's shoulder was against the heavy door.

It fell with a crash, and the half-breed forced his way into the cabin, with Jesse James at his heels, both yelling like Indians.

Frank kept up his fusillade upon the windows while listening to the whiz of an occasional bullet past his ears.

Bill Mason joined him just as his last weapon was emptied, and turned a dozen bullets into each gaping window.

"My God! Will Tracy never come!" yelled some one, from inside the cabin.

It was the sheriff's voice, and showed that he was badly frightened.

His reply was a coarse laugh and another volley from Mason.

Then once more the hoofbeats sounded in the street.

The natives had triumphed over their antagonists, and were coming to the sheriff's rescue.

Frank James signaled his brother as he reloaded his weapons.

In another minute the pack would be upon him.

"Curse him! Why doesn't he come out?" yelled Mason, as he wheeled his horse around, putting his back against the logs directly under a window.

Every sound had ceased within the cabin, and as a dozen horsemen rode up, Frank swung his mount around and faced them.

"Hands up! Another shot and you die!" roared Dick Tracy's voice. "We've killed two of your gang, and I've got you, Jesse James!"

A rapid succession of shots from four pistols answered him.

Mason and Frank each gripped one in each hand, and they had promptly emptied them.

Shrieks and groans followed the shots, and men reeled from their saddles.

Four fell to the earth, and the horses trampled them in their terror.

Till Jesse James did not come out of the cabin.

Frank ground his teeth.

His weapons were empty.

The next second a stinging pain gripped his shoulder and he fell from his horse senseless.

Till Mason dashed ahead, but another bullet stopped

as he pitched from his horse, there was a hoarse shout from the natives.

"They're winged! We've killed 'em! It's the last of the Jameses!"

"Hold on! Where's Carson? Hello in there! Carson!"

Dick Tracy sprang from his horse as he bawled at the posse.

Leaving his men, he dashed forward and entered the

"This hyar chap is Frank James, not Jess," said one of the cowboys, who had stooped over the fallen outlaw.

"And this other feller is Bill Mason! We ain't nabbed the right one, after all!"

"When he's in ther cabin! After him, men!" roared another voice.

The posse bounded forward, leaving one man beside the two injured outlaws.

They glanced hastily over the empty first floor, which was now lighted by a lantern, then crowded up the narrow stairs to the second floor of the rude building.

A panic followed.

Jesse James had gone.

They found Carson groaning with pain, beside the dead body of the bookkeeper.

The two men who had been there to assist him were skulking under a table.

"Great God! He's gone! Jesse James has escaped!" roared Tracy. "Look, men, and see if he has taken the money. It was in canvas bags back there in the dugout."

Four men of the posse turned back down the stairs and hurried into the dugout.

A dark lantern, dropped by one of the outlaws, illuminated the place, but the bags were gone, and there was no trace of the bandits.

"Quick! After them! The women will attend to the injured!" cried Tracy, as he caught sight of Mrs. Carson and her servants creeping up the stairway.

"We have work to do, men! We must capture Jesse James to-night! He has escaped by the rear window while his men engaged Carson and Walters at the front! These other two curs don't seem to have given them much assistance."

He kicked one of the skulking fellows under the table as he spoke, and then headed the rest of his men down the narrow staircase.

"We'll tend ter them thar cusses later," growled one of the miners. "Jest now we hev'n't er minute ter spare! If Jess has got erway he ain't more'n a mile from ther courthouse. We'd better divide our men and cover every trail, eh Tracy?"

"That's the plan, Doolittle! I'll take the path to Roaring Cañon! It's my opinion he'll go that way, though I can't be certain."

They rushed pell-mell from the cabin and mounted their horses, then all stood a minute for a final order from their leader.

Frank James had been rolled over and his wounds examined, and two of the men were busy rigging a sort of litter.

"We'll pull him through this so's ter be able ter give him er little of his own medicine," said the fellow, who was guarding him.

"Ther jail will keep him safe till he's nigh his health then ther old scaffold is still on ther hill whar Jess hung Unintah's father."

"Now, men, one word! Hunt him like bloodhounds! Don't let Jesse James escape from our clutches to-night!" cried Dick Tracy.

"We must recover the money! He's got ten thousand dollars!" yelled Doolittle.

"He's got more than that," came from the white lips of a newcomer.

"The cutthroat has just succeeded in kidnapping my daughter!"

Old Mr. Ferguson had reached the scene.

He was on foot, and trembling like a man with the ague.

"Good Heavens! You don't mean it!" cried the whole posse at once.

"We thought we'd settled the last of the cowardly redskins!"

Tracy ground his teeth and clenched his fists, viciously.

"She was no sooner in the house than they broke in and seized her! There must have been others besides those you shot down, Tracy."

"How did they get in?"

"One of my cursed Chinamen helped them! They knocked me down with a blow. I could not protect her."

"We were fools not to guard the house," groaned Tracy. "Curse Jesse James and his gang! By Heaven! I'll have his heart's blood for that action!"

"We'll help you, Dick!" cried every man in the crowd. "We'll never lose ther trail till ther ruffian is in our clutches!"

"I say, where are them two detectives?" asked Doolittle, suddenly.

Tracy had mounted his horse and was reloading his revolvers.

"Up to their necks in troubles of their own," he said, briefly. "Another part of the gang has been dodging them all the evening. I'm looking for them to turn up almost any minute."

"Now, then, which way, Tracy?" asked Doolittle, as the man drew into line.

Tracy gave his orders and the horsemen separated.

They were to cover every path that led out of the settlement.

Ten minutes later, Tracy, Doolittle, and a fellow named Allen struck the trail of the outlaws.

They found not only fresh hoof prints of horses going at a tremendous speed, but the lighter indentations of boot heels.

CHAPTER VII.

THE OUTLAW'S TRICK.

"On, men! We've struck the scent! The outlaw king is before us!" shouted Tracy.

The posse galloped on, each man keeping a sharp lookout over the country.

They dug their spurs into their horses' sides and sped on toward the cañon.

Suddenly, at a bend in the path, Dick Tracy's horse shied violently.

The cowboy pulled him in with a jerk, but by that time the other two steeds had followed the example.

Something was lying on one side of the trail, which they saw at a glance was a human body.

Tracy sprang from his horse and examined the head and a cry of disappointment issued from his lips.

"Curse the luck! It's Jesse James himself! As dead as a log! There's a mask over his face and a bullet in his temple! Get down here, Doolittle. You know the rascal's features!"

Doolittle slid from his saddle and stooped over the prostrate form.

"It looks like Jess, all right," he said, slowly. "That's his belt and them's his pistols. You can't tell nuthin' by ther whiskers, and ther dust hez made him as black as a nigger. Some on us probably put a bullet into him and he managed to live till he got hyar, then his strength give out and he bit ther dust, ther sinner!"

"Shall we go on, Dick?" asked Buck Allen, giving the body a keen glance.

Tracy loosened the dead man's belt and flung it over his saddle, then he stuck the two handsome pistols into his belt before he answered.

"You can go back with the body and see if it is really Jess, but Doolittle and I will go on to Roaring Cañon. Miss Ferguson is ahead and we've got to find her!"

"And Tim Pyke's ahead, too, ther sneakin' traitor!"

"We'll soon settle him when we meet him!" growled Tracy.

He helped Buck raised the body and hang it over the back of the cowboy's mustang.

Then the two men galloped off toward the cañon, while Buck, walking at his horse's head, retraced his steps to the settlement.

When the last sound of their footsteps died out, Jesse James crept out from behind a boulder some distance from the roadway.

He was dressed in the garments that had belonged to the dead man and was minus his cartridge belt and pistols.

"Hanged if I like to lose my pops that way," he muttered, as he limped along, "but it was just my luck to turn my ankle, and I didn't see any other way to fool those fellows but to trade places with poor Dilkes for the time being!"

He stopped in the path and put his ear to the ground.

The great outlaw had secured his booty by helping Hawk drop it from the rear window of the cabin, while the excitement in front was at its height, and, after seeing it on the horses, he had started for the cañon on foot, as he did not dare risk going back to the scene of the battle.

He could easily guess how Dilkes came to his end.

No doubt he had been tricked and shot by the detective whom he was shadowing, and the question now was, where was the sleuthhound?

He would hardly care to meet him as he was, unarmed and unmounted.

It was three long miles to Roaring Cañon, and already the hour for the outlaws' meeting was past.

Jesse James knew that out of his followers that night only Hawk and Tim Pyke remained, but he trusted to the Indians to help protect his treasure, for they would be at the dugout before Pyke got there.

He hurried his steps, cursing his luck as he went.

He would have given "his kingdom for a horse," and at last fortune favored him.

The neigh of a steed behind him made him dart into the bushes.

Only the bend in the road had saved him from being discovered.

Flattening himself upon the ground behind a rock, the outlaw waited until the restless horse and its rider were just abreast of him.

"Curse you! Shet up thet thar racket! What's the matter with ye, anyway, you brute!" growled the fellow who was riding.

Jesse James recognized the voice as belonging to Tod Welles, a cowboy miner from Gold City.

In an instant it flashed into his mind that Tod had brought the news of Sheriff Banning's fate to the Pine Ridge settlement, and a great hankering came over him to kill the fellow.

His hand flew to his waist, but, of course, he had no weapon.

Nothing was left him but the two knives that he had jammed down into his bootlegs.

He drew these out and began creeping toward the road and the horse that Tod was riding went on with its antics.

Something was wrong with the creature's bit, and instead of adjusting it, Tod was urging the beast forward, angrily.

Just as he dug his spurs into its sides Jesse James straightened himself up and the moonlight was reflected on the keen blade of a bowie knife.

Whizz! Whirr!

The knife cut through the air like a flash of lightning.

As the sharp point imbedded itself in Tod's neck he gave a howl of terror.

The horse reared suddenly and then sprang to one side.

Jesse dashed out into the full moonlight, brandishing the second glittering blade.

As Tod turned in his saddle with a cocked revolver in his hand, the second knife caught him fairly in the throat.

He gave another cry, and his pistol cracked aimlessly.

Then the horse fairly stood on its hind legs, dropping

him off easily, after which it ran for a short distance, and then stopped.

The horse had only been startled, and seeing no further danger in sight, quickly calmed down, though its ears were alert for further developments.

Jesse James paused long enough to jerk the knives from his victim's neck and secure his belt and revolvers, and then hurried on, calling softly to the horse. He soon overtook it and mounted.

Leaning over the animal's head, he fixed the bit properly, then, after patting the creature a minute, he set off at a canter.

The outlaw was now armed and mounted and quite himself again, the pain in his ankle being entirely forgotten.

As he gradually increased his speed, he began cursing the fate that had delayed him.

Fortunately he had not been riding Fleetwind that evening, so the loss of his own horse was merely an inconvenience. His own faithful animal was awaiting him in the dugout at Roaring Cañon.

The moon was sinking toward the west, and the mists were growing denser, which cast a gloom over the country and made each object seem distorted.

This accounted for the fact that two riders appeared upon a small knoll just a few rods distant and disappeared again without his seeing them.

They were the two detectives, and, as they spied the lone horseman, they rode close together in order to converse quietly.

"Who the deuce is that, Higgins?"

"Heaven only knows! Hang the fellow! Why couldn't he wait till I had a look at him!"

The horseman had disappeared in a second, leaving the detectives staring.

The gang has separated, I reckon. The boys must have them rattled. It's possible they've caught Jess. If they have we're out of it."

"I don't believe it! They've given him a hustle, all right, but he'll bob up serenely when the fuss is over!"

"Some deal of the outlaws, you can bet! He stands in with the redskins, they say, on account of his befriending Unitalah."

"Do you know the way to the cañon?"

"Yes, straight ahead for a mile, then you strike a trail that does a sort of serpentine over two miles of rocks and huckleberry bushes."

"Sh! There's that fellow again! Now which is he, friend or foe? He's riding like a trooper!"

They had caught another glimpse of Jesse James, who was now riding rapidly.

For just a minute the outlaw's form was outlined clearly,

on a knoll and the mists thinned enough for them to get a good look at him.

"By thunder! It's Dilkes! The man I killed!" exclaimed Higgins. "Well, I'll be hanged if he ain't as tough as a bull moose! It's him or his ghost, just as sure as shooting!"

"You must have missed a vital spot, but there's another chance left! Suppose we chase him!"

"There's nothing else left for us to do, as he is going our way, but I did want to wait here and see if Jess himself wouldn't pass us."

"It's just as you say."

"Then we'll wait a minute longer. That fellow will keep, besides, there's no reward for his carcass, and Tracy and his men are already ahead of us."

The detectives drew up in the shadow of a boulder and kept perfectly silent. They would have been wild with rage if they had guessed that Jesse James was escaping them, but his cleverness in sitting his horse exactly like Dilkes had deceived them completely.

While they waited for him to pass, Jesse James rode on like a whirlwind. Reaching a turn in the road, he struck off to the north, following a narrow, crooked trail down the slope of the mountain.

A half hour later he entered Roaring Cañon, which took its name from a mountain stream that thundered over the rocks somewhere out of sight in the depths below him.

Arriving at this spot, the outlaw dismounted from his horse and put his ear to the ground.

There was nothing to be heard at first, then came a gentle undulation. Jesse bade the horse stand still as he stooped again and listened. Louder and louder came the noises to his ears until they resolved themselves into the hoofbeats of at least two horses.

"Ha! There they are, Tracy and Jake Doolittle. They're searching for the dugout, curse them!" he muttered.

This was exactly what the outlaw wanted.

He meant to get the men between two fires, if possible, his own and that of his friends, whom he knew were in the dugout.

Leading his horse by the bridle, he picked his way cautiously down the rocky cañon, stopping now and then to listen intently.

Suddenly the noises ceased.

Jesse James was back upon his horse in a minute.

Pressing close to the steep bank of rocks, he crept a few steps farther. Twenty feet ahead, on the right, was a clump of stunted cedars. If he could gain the shelter of these, he could see the door of the dugout. He made the journey carefully, his horse obeying his lightest whisper, and was just in time to see Tracy and Doolittle rein up

before the door of the dugout, which was a slat of stone set perpendicularly in the bank, and which could only be moved in a special manner.

The outlaw shielded himself behind the biggest tree trunk and, peering through an opening at Tracy, he fingered his revolver lovingly.

"I could shoot the fellow down, but I won't," was his thought. "I may be able to make a deal with the fellow for the ransom of his sweetheart."

Tracy had dismounted from his horse and was inspecting the slat of stone and, as he did so, he kept up a low conversation with his companion.

"This is where the tracks end, so this is where they meet, Doolittle. Now, how the deuce do they move that stone unless they all carry a pick and crowbar?"

Jesse James chuckled at this, for it was a device of his own.

He glared through the clump of cedars like a tiger as he watched the cowboy's efforts.

"Ther place is er dugout all right, and it's er big one, too. It wuz made by er gang of hoss thieves in ther sixties. It's jest like ther James gang ter know all erbout it," said Doolittle, who was still in the saddle.

"They know these hills better than we do, you can bet," went on Tracy. "Especially such holes as these which were not meant for honest people."

"Waal, I hope thet thar corpse wuz Jess, but thar ain't no tellin', Dick. It looked like him, all right, and 'twas his clothes and figger. When they wash him up at ther dead house, they kin identify ther featur's."

"I hope it's him, too, but it's most too good to be true! Hello! I've found the way to open this thing, after all!"

"The devil you have!" whispered Jesse James, between his teeth, at the same time leaning forward in the saddle.

Snap went a twig from a rotten limb of the cedar!

In a second Doolittle faced around in his saddle.

"Hah! Who comes thar!" he demanded roughly.

The outlaw held his breath and waited.

"A catermount, I reckon, anyhow I skeared ther critter!" remarked Doolittle, after 'a second.

"By Jove! You'd be astonished to see how easy it moves!" said Tracy, softly. "I can open it in a jiffy now! Are you ready with your weapons?"

"You bet, but I say, Dick, ain't we er little foolhardy? How ther deuce do we know how many of them devils is in thar?"

"Bah! There can't be more than Tim Pyke and an Injun! We finished the rest at the settlement."

"You're sure it's Pyke?"

"Yes. I saw him, the traitor! He was skulking in the rear of the sheriff's cabin and never raised so much as a finger to help us."

But s'pose Unitah is thar! She kin shoot like a tar-
I don't believe she'll shoot me, and if she tries, Ar-
a won't let her."

You mean Miss Ferguson, I s'pose. Waal, p'raps she
t prevent it! I don't want ter discourage yer, Dick.
jest tryin' ter do ther thing proper!"

I understand, and I don't blame you a bit, but I've got
o in there! Do you suppose I could wait until you
help? Why, man alive, the suspense would kill me!"
reckon it would. I'm with yer, Dick. Hold on till I
the hosses, and then where you lead I'll foller!"
You're a dandy, old fellow! I knew you wouldn't
me! Tie the horses yonder behind that clump of
s."

he spoke, Tracy pointed to the trees, behind which
outlaw was concealed, and at once Doolittle moved
ard in that direction.

ap went another limb of the rotten tree.

the outlaw had struck it with his arm as he raised his

"Ho! Halt! Who comes thar?" roared Doolittle

ck!
iz!

ullet sped by his ear and flattened itself against the
f the dugout.

ck!
ck!

little blazed away at the clump of cedars, while
mounted his horse and drew his revolver.

o ther devil are you? Come out and show your-
pawled Doolittle, furiously, as he pranced about in
f the cedars.

James moved in his saddle so as to get a space be-
the tree trunks, but it was so dark in the cañon
could not see either man distinctly.

o the deuce are you?" he called back, disguising his
o that Tracy should not know him.

show you who I am, you skulkin' rascal! Come
er man an' lets hev fair play, ef thar's enny such
yer!" was the ringing answer.

ny how he happened to come here this evening.
t look as if he feared a brace of detectives."

fears nothing. The fellow is a dare-devil of the
t water."

on will be sore on us for not coming to his aid,
t were we to do? That fellow on the roan mare
me like a shadow! The only way I kept him
ooting me was by making him think I was a
n."

s on my way to the sheriff's shanty when the
ge in the street occurred, and I had a chance to

pepper the fellow they call Bluewater. But you and I
have nothing to do with the settlement's troubles, anyway!
We are after Jesse James and no one else! It would not
mean a cent in our pocket if we helped some one else to
capture him."

"Right you are!" And we've got our chance, I'm think-
ing, for if he's alive, he'll soon be on his way to Roaring
Cañon."

"The other two got away with the booty. I caught a
glimpse of them just as I dodged behind the courthouse."

"Yes, I saw them too, and Jesse James was not one of
them. I had just plunked a bullet into the fellow on the
roan and made a break for the bushes."

"I wonder what brought the Injuns to the settlement to-
night."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DUGOUT.

"Pepper him and force him out!" cried Tracy, getting
a range between the cedars. "It's one of the James gang,
of course, and he must not escape us!"

"Ha! ha!" laughed the outlaw, still disguising his
voice. "That's easier said than done, Dick Tracy! The
members of the James gang are not so easily captured!"

"Yet we have shot down five of their number to-night!"
retorted Tracy, "that isn't very bad work for peaceable
people!"

"Honest Injun! Is thet thar true?" asked Jesse James,
feigning to be interested. "Hev yer really bagged five of
ther rascals, Tracy?"

"We have, indeed, and we'll have another, if you'll
oblige us by putting your head in range!" said Tracy,
coolly. "You ain't fooling me a little bit by your lan-
guage, you skulker!"

"Then I mout as well come out an' be shot down like
ther rest, eh, Tracy!"

"You can come or stay, it don't matter to us! As soon
as it is a little lighter, we'll come behind there and get
you."

"Ha! ha! That's good, too! I admire yer nerve,
Tracy! Look out thar! One! two! three! How does
thet kind of shootin' suit yer?"

As he counted, Jesse James dropped the hammer of his
pistol.

The bullets passed between Tracy's hat brim and his
ear, one of them cutting a lock of hair cleanly from his
temple.

"Three good shots! I congratulate you! You must
be able to shoot around a corner!" laughed Tracy, coolly,
as he moved his body a little.

Doolittle's horse was still prancing, and he had hard
work to keep the tree trunk between it and his hidden an-
tagonist.

While he was endeavoring to do so he felt a bullet pass through the loose top of his bootleg and strike with a thud against the rocks behind him.

"Snakes! The fellow must have eyes like an owl," he muttered; then he leaned over his horse's head as he urged it nearer to the bushes.

Both men were peering straight before them at the clump of trees, so they did not see that the door of the dugout had opened.

Jesse James saw it, and, in a second, he put his fingers to his lips and gave a long, shrill whistle.

"A signal! We are trapped!" shouted Tracy, turning his head.

He was just in time to see the barrel of a rifle aimed at his heart.

Like a flash of lightning he discharged his pistol.

The rifle fell to the ground, and a yell of pain came from the dugout. With a warwhoop that echoed through the cañon, Jessie James dashed from behind the trees and began emptying his revolvers.

Doolittle fell from his horse at almost the first shot, and Tracy, after emptying his weapons, turned and dashed down the cañon.

A hail of bullets followed him through the darkness, and, just as he turned a bend, the voice of Jesse James called after him:

"Ha! ha! So you thought I was dead, did you! You'll be dead before I will, my brave Dick Tracy!"

Bending over Doolittle's body, the outlaw calmly appropriated his ammunition and weapons, then led both of the horses back and tied them behind the cedars.

After that, leaving the body of Doolittle still lying upon the ground, he entered the dugout and closed the door behind him.

A narrow passageway, just high enough for his head, led to an inner excavation, which served as a stable. In this stifling place Fleetwind and two other horses were standing close together.

An arch of solid stone led to another cavern, and, as he stooped to enter it, Jesse James cast a glance before him. Hawk was lying upon the floor, writhing in pain, while over him bent Tim Pyke and Unitah carefully bandaging his injury.

Ardella Ferguson was huddled in one corner of the place, but she was not lifting a finger to relieve the half-breed's agony.

At her side was a pile of booty of goodly dimensions.

It comprised the box stolen from Sheriff Banning and the bags of gold taken from Carson.

The outlaw smiled at Unitah and then passed beside her.

As he did so, the dark head of an Indian was protruded through the archway.

"Hark! Listen! The ground trembles! A horseman outside," he muttered.

Jesse James turned on his heel and went back to the stable, while Ardella Ferguson clasped her hands and listened intently.

The place was dimly lighted by lanterns, and, as the outlaw returned from reconnoitring, he pushed his hat up from his forehead.

He was a handsome man, even though every feature was cruel, and as he glanced across the dugout, he saw his prisoner's eyes upon him.

"Are my rescuers at hand, Jesse James?" she asked, sternly. "If so, I demand that you release me! How dare you hold captive a woman who has never harmed you?"

"I dare anything! Have you that to learn, Miss Ferguson?" retorted Jesse James, coolly. "You will not be harmed, so have no fear. You are as safe here with Unitah and her Indians as you would be at your father's fireside."

"Faugh! An outcast's daughter and a couple of savages! How dare you insult me with such company?"

A furious light burned in Unitah's eyes, but Jesse James put his hand upon her shoulder as he answered, calmly:

"Unitah is as pure and good as yourself, Miss Ferguson, and it's poor tact in you to insult the memory of her mother. Now, then, Unitah, make yourself as comfortable as you can. There are plenty of skins for beds and your guards shall lie in the stable."

"And you, Jesse James, where are you going?" asked the young girl, quickly. Her eyes had softened instantly, and were shining with a strange light.

"Ha! Ha! What a question, Unitah! Why, my own wife would never dream of being so impertinent! Where Jesse James goes matters not to any man or woman!"

"But it does, indeed!" persisted the girl, firmly. "There are horsemen outside, Bison says, and he is never mistaken. Are they friends or foes? Please answer that question."

"If they were friends, I would bid them enter."

"Then they are foes!"

As Unitah spoke, Tim Pyke stole out to the horses.

Jesse James unbuckled his belt and began refilling it.

He knew that Dick Tracy had galloped back up the cañon, and that it was only a matter of time when he would return with a posse.

As he fingered his weapons, he laid them down upon the floor of the dugout, and, like a cat, Miss Ferguson sprang at them. The outlaw burst into a roar that vibrated through the cavern.

"Hold on, my beauty!" he said, jovially. "Wait till they are loaded, then I'll give you a shot at the heart of the king of outlaws!"

"Never, Jesse James, you shall not!" cried Unitah. "You do not know this girl! She would be only too glad to kill you!"

"I would, indeed," muttered Miss Ferguson, looking at Jesse James squarely in the eye.

The outlaw smiled and returned her gaze.

His smile disclosed a row of strong, white teeth, and while his face as tender as a woman's.

Miss Ferguson shrank back upon her furs and stared at him curiously.

A moment later the outlaw loaded and handed her a pistol.

Unitah gasped and set her little white teeth firmly.

She expected to see the man she loved shot down in an instant.

But Jesse James knew human nature far better than she did, and, as he stood within ten feet of Ardella, he looked at her pleasantly.

"Now, my beauty, my life is in your hands! Shoot if you will! There are six bullets in the weapon—enough for you to fresco my heart with your monogram, 'J. K.'"

Ardella Ferguson grasped the weapon tightly, and her shot fired like a panther's, but, as she attempted to pull her arm, her strength seemed to fail her.

Unitah's color came back and she breathed more easily. The girl was too thoroughly a woman to commit a murder.

The stealthy sound behind the outlaw caused him to turn his head.

He did so without giving so much as a thought to the girl before him.

"Hush! The stone is moving!" whispered another red-head.

Jesse James turned back instantly and faced the girl, and a strange light shone in his steely eyes as he regarded her, grimly:

"You hear, Miss Ferguson? The stone is being moved! Whoever is coming is sure to be an enemy, and I have four armed men to help me, I have them at my disposal."

"Do you mean that you will shoot them down?" whispered the girl.

"Like dogs, my pretty one, and no doubt Dick Tracy is among them!"

A cry burst from Ardella's lips, and her finger moved to the trigger.

Jesse James gave her another second before moving to his position before her.

"A word from me, he will be riddled with bullets," continued, smilingly, "so there is your excuse if you wish to shoot me."

Another groan fell from the poor girl's lips, and then the weapon dropped from her nerveless fingers.

"I can't do it! I can't take human life!" she moaned. "Oh, you are not human, Jesse James, or you could not do it!"

The outlaw did not wait, but picked up his pistols.

As he sprang toward the outer room, Unitah turned scornfully upon her companion.

"So you dared not shoot him! Bah, what a coward! I would kill any man in a second who threatened to harm my love!"

Her eyes flashed fire as she spoke, but Ardella did not see them, for her face was buried in her hands and she was weeping bitterly.

A moment later Unitah, herself, crept toward the stable. There was a pistol in her hand and a determined look upon her features. She had cast her lot with the bandit king that day, and it was not her nature to flinch in time of peril.

Outside, in the narrow entrance, the two Indians were crouching, both with their pistols leveled at the slab of stone which served as a door to the dugout.

Behind them were Pyke and Jesse James, each with a dark lantern in one hand and a revolver in the other.

Jesse James was turning the blaze so that he could watch both sides of the stone, for it could be rolled to one side as well as the other.

As it moved back, they would have those outside in the glow of their light, while their own bodies would remain in darkness.

The sound of muffled voices reached their ears, and once or twice the stone moved softly, as though it were about to open.

Jesse James leaned against the wall of the dugout with a cruel smile upon his face, for he felt as sure of his victory as though the dead bodies of his enemies were already before him.

Once he glanced inside to see what Ardella was doing, and saw that Hawk had raised himself upon one elbow and was watching her stealthily.

Unitah's eyes met the outlaw's as he moved back to his place, and he discerned something in her glance that made him stare at her a minute.

"What is it, Unitah?" he asked, putting his lips close to her ear.

The young girl turned her head instantly and kissed his cheek.

"I love you, Jesse James," was her astonishing answer.

The outlaw recoiled as if she had struck him.

"Hush! Don't say that, child! I am a married man, Unitah! I'll take you to live with my wife, if you wish, or would you prefer my mother?"

"Your mother, by all means! I should hate your wife!" said the girl, quickly; "but don't speak of that now, for I am going to follow you, Jesse James! I'm going to join the gang and be an outlaw!"

The bandit king checked the roar of laughter that rose to his lips, but he chuckled inwardly at the girl's announcement.

"So you want to be a second 'Calamity Jane,' do you?" he whispered. "Well, I'll tell you right here, it won't do, Unitah! Jesse James has got enough to do to look after his own head without trying to save a woman's!"

"Then you don't want me in the gang!" said the girl, with her lips quivering.

What Jesse James would have said it would be hard to guess, but just at that second something distracted his attention.

The big stone had slid to one side without a sound and a flash of firelight burst into the dugout.

Crack!

Bang!

The outlaw's pistol spoke at the same time as the Indians'.

There was just a second of waiting and then a shower of bullets crashed into the narrow opening.

Jesse James was too quick for them, however.

In the fraction of a second, he had discovered that a fire had been built at the door of the dugout, but there was no one in the range of their weapons, and, like a flash, he had grabbed Unitah and jumped back into the stable.

Tim Pyke was unharmed also, but the Indians were not so lucky in escaping the shower of lead.

They both received bullets in their heads and dropped to the ground lifeless.

Then a voice from outside shouted into the dugout:

"Ha! ha! Jesse James! We've got you at last like a rat in a trap! Come out of there, you cutthroat, or we'll come in and fetch you!"

The outlaw recognized the voice as that of one of the detectives who had escaped his bullets that day at Mike's cabin.

In a second, his powerful voice roared back an answer:

"Come in and be hanged, you infernal sleuthhound! It'll give me the greatest of pleasure to entertain you!"

CHAPTER IX.

BAFFLED AGAIN.

Jesse James was noted for his coolness in time of danger, and now, when he was caught, as the detective said, "like a rat in a trap," his nerve did not desert him.

Almost in the same breath that he answered the detective's challenge, he gave an order to Pyke.

Unitah heard it, and stepped back into the corner where Miss Ferguson was waiting in breathless suspense.

"Quick! Give him your dress and hat!" she commanded. "I'll guard the door until you disrobe, then you can wrap one of the Indian blankets around you."

She picked a gaudy blanket from the ground as she spoke and tossed it toward her.

Miss Ferguson quite naturally started to resent the order, but Unitah's eyes flashed fire and she dropped her hand to the butt of a revolver that protruded from her belt.

"Hurry up! You've got to do it, so you may as well be about it! I'm going to show you how I would protect the man I love! They'll never get Jesse James except over my dead body!"

Miss Ferguson saw that there was no use in delaying and, in a minute, her gown and hat lay on the floor and she had wrapped herself in the blanket.

Jesse James had piled the dead bodies of the Indians on top of each other in the passageway and was crouching behind them, keeping a bead on the entrance.

Unitah snatched up the feminine garments and handed them to Pyke, who was of very slight build and could wear them easily.

While he was getting into the gown, with Unitah's help, Jesse James kept up his tantalizing invitations.

"Come in, by all means, you cursed whelps!" he roared. "There are ladies inside who will be glad to see you! Come in, Dick Tracy! Your sweetheart awaits you!"

A cry of rage answered this last assertion.

Dick Tracy was somewhere outside, but he was keeping carefully out of range of the outlaw's bullets.

"Surrender that lady, you fiend, or I will let the rocks down upon your head!" cried the cowboy, furiously.

"Easier said than done, my Dicky bird. If you really want the girl, you must come and take her!"

"If you want money, Mr. Ferguson will give it to you!" bawled Tracy again. "Name your price, you robber, and let your prisoner walk forth to liberty! On the word of an honest man, I swear that you shall be paid your figure!"

"Ha! ha! that sounds more like business!" replied Jesse James. "Go, then, you blunder-heels, and tell that old tenderfoot that it will take ten thousand dollars to set his daughter free! He can have her at that price and as quick as I see the color of his money!"

"That will mean two hours' delay! I can't ride back to the settlement and return in less time! Can't you take my word for it that you will get the money? As

Miss Ferguson herself, and then let her out of that corner! I will meet you with the money wherever you say, and fair play shall be the word at the meeting!"

"A very pretty arrangement, and one that I am disposed to consider," was the bandit's answer, in a milder voice.

Unitah had stepped to his side and whispered something in his ear, at which the outlaw could not restrain a chuckle.

Once more Dick Tracy's voice bellowed into the opening, showing that his body was barely to one side of the dangerous entrance to the dugout.

"What is it, Jesse James? Will you take my word? Let Miss Ferguson swear to you that you will get the money, then allow her to walk forth from your hell hole there!"

"And after she is free, what then, Dick Tracy! Are you willing to swear that there are no sleuthhounds outside who are watching and waiting to put a bullet through me?"

The detective, Higgins, answered that question.

"I am here, Jesse James, but Tracy has spoken the truth. Give up the girl at once and you shall walk out unmolested. I will not put a finger on the trigger of my weapon until you have received your money."

The outlaw hesitated and did some rapid thinking.

Up to the present time he had no inkling of the truth that Higgins had a companion with him, and that the detective was only speaking for himself in the transaction.

Twice, while the parlying was going on, Miss Ferguson had attempted to creep to the passageway, but both times she had been warned to desist by Hawk placing his finger upon the hammer of his weapon.

Her lover's voice came in to her, but the words were muffled, and, at last, in the agony of her spirit, she called him shrilly.

Hawk sprang at her like a panther, and put a rough hand upon her shoulder, but, as he did so, Jesse James seized him by the collar and shook him vigorously:

"Hands off! How dare you touch her, you whelp! Let her yell just as much as she wants to!"

He knew that the sound of her cries would madden Tracy and make him even more reckless than he was present.

As he went back to his post, after seeing Hawk punished for his rudeness, Dick Tracy called in at him in a frenzy of anger.

"Quick! Accept my terms or defy me, Jesse James! I can endure this no longer! Let Miss Ferguson out. I'll drag a cannon to this spot and blow the dugout atoms, even though she perish with you!"

"Then, to save the lady's life, I'll take your offer!"

sneered the outlaw, "and you can meet me here at day-break with the money, Dick Tracy."

As he spoke, he moved back from the passage so that Unitah and Tim Pyke could pass.

The latter wore Miss Ferguson's garments, with the broad brim of the hat concealing his features.

"Now, then, Hawk, we must be ready with the horses," whispered Jesse James, softly, "as soon as they begin firing outside, I will dash out and take a hand and you must follow as fast as your legs will let you."

As he spoke the outlaw glanced at his prisoner.

"Throw the gold on Fleetwind," he ordered, shortly; then, as a revolver cracked outside, he made his way from the dugout.

A scene that delighted his cruel soul met the outlaw's eyes.

Unitah had emerged first from the dugout and looked around.

The fire that had been kindled before the door was still blazing merrily, and, as she turned, she found herself looking squarely into the barrel of a pistol in the hands of Dick Tracy.

"Shame on you, Dick Tracy! Can't you see that it is Unitah," she cried, sharply. "I am acting as chaperon and lady's maid for the charming Ardella!"

Tracy lowered his weapon at once, but it was a fatal move, for, before he could raise it again, Unitah had him covered.

"Take that!" she cried, savagely, as she dropped the hammer.

A bullet passed through Tracy's arm, causing it to fall limply at his side, and just at that minute, Tim Pyke, in his disguise, emerged from the dugout.

The detective, who was on the other side of the opening, yelled a word of warning, then he raised his weapon and drew a bead on Unitah.

"Drop that weapon, or, woman that you are, I'll blow you to atoms!" he bellowed.

Unitah dropped her revolver and bounded out of the light, just as Tim Pyke sprang at Tracy's throat like an angry bloodhound.

Crack!

Crack!

The two pistol shots came from different directions.

Taylor, who was hidden behind a tree at a little distance from the dugout, had taken a shot at Tim Pyke, while Jesse James himself had made a target of Higgins.

The outlaw emerged from the dugout like a thunderbolt, and, as Higgins fell beneath his fire, Hawk led Fleetwind out and, leaving him a few paces away, darted back into the dugout.

Taylor's pistol spoke sharply.

Crack! Bang!

At the same time he gave vent to a series of war whoops in the hope of scaring the outlaw into thinking he was surrounded by enemies.

Pyke had felled Tracy to the earth and had gone down on top of him, for the cowboy's left hand had pulled another pistol from his belt and a bullet was imbedded in the treacherous miner's vitals.

Unitah emptied her revolver in Taylor's direction and, as Hawk came out with the second horse, she darted into the dugout.

Jesse James sheltered his body behind a tree.

He had no idea exactly where his antagonist was, but he was too clever to be taken in by the war whoops, which ceased entirely after a minute.

Taylor was forced to stop shooting after emptying one weapon, for three men were down and Jesse James was hidden.

He turned his eyes upon the dugout door, which was clearly outlined by the flames; but, when Hawk emerged again, his body was protected by a woman's, for the fellow was half dragging and half carrying Miss Ferguson.

Unitah followed closely, leading a third horse by the bridle, and keeping the horse between her and the direction from which the shots had been coming.

"Here, Fleetwind! Here, old girl!" called Jesse James, softly, and the noble horse went straight to the spot where his master was concealed in the shadows.

The outlaw mounted her like a flash, but he was none too quick, for a bullet from Taylor's revolver grazed his shoulder.

"Now, then! race for your lives! Follow me, Hawk! Come, Unitah!" shouted Jesse James, as he bounded forward like a thunderbolt.

Crack! crack! went Taylor's weapon, as he dashed out of the bushes.

He rushed across the clearing after the horses, firing as he went, and, at the very last shot, a yell of rage greeted him.

Jesse James was out of sight down the cañon, with Unitah at his heels, but Hawk threw up both arms as he howled with pain and then pitched headlong from the saddle.

The form of a woman still clung to the frightened steed, so the detective felt certain that his bullet had not struck Miss Ferguson.

He hurried back to the clearing and bent over Higgins, finding that his friend was not badly hurt, and was rapidly recovering.

"Hold on, old man! I'll fix you in a jiffy! It's only a flesh wound, and will be all right when I stop the bleeding."

He jerked off his friend's coat as he spoke and bound

up a wound in his shoulder, then the two moved over took a look at Tracy.

"By thunder! it's Tim Pyke! Well, if that wasn't infernal trick!" growled Taylor. "They rigged the low up in the girl's clothes so we would not shoot and that gave him his chance to spring at Tracy!"

"Well, he's got his deserts. He's as dead as a Tracy's done for, too, poor fellow, so we may as well be going!"

"That fellow is a terror," muttered Taylor, referring to Jesse James. "I'm beginning to think the devil himself can't catch him!"

"Hark! What's that?"

The sound of a horse's hoofs could be heard galloping up the cañon.

Taylor looked at his own weapons and then he turned to Tracy's, while Higgins jerked a seven-shooter from the belt that Pyke wore under his female outfit.

"Lie low, Higgins! If it's Jesse James, we've got this time! Maybe he's come back to pay me for shooting that half-breed!"

The fire was low now, so they could see the horse behind it more clearly and, in a second, both detectives saw that the horse was ridden by a woman.

By Jove! It's Miss Ferguson!" yelled Taylor, and he darted forward. "She's broken loose from them, Higgins! Hello, there, Miss Ferguson!"

The young girl pulled in her horse and galloped around.

"Dick! Dick! Are you safe, Dick?" she called softly.

The two detectives hurried to her side. They did not mean that she should know her lover's fate until she was safe at home with her father.

The clatter of horse's hoofs in the distance helped them in their dilemma.

"Quick! Ride on, Miss Ferguson, just as hard as you can! Jesse James has missed you and is coming back. Our horses are in the bushes; we will be between you and the outlaws!"

The brave girl touched her horse and dashed ahead. She knew this was not the time to search for her lover.

As she urged her steed up the canyon, the two detectives darted into the bushes and secured their mounts and were after her, still hearing the hoofs behind them.

If it was Jesse James who was pursuing them, he was not making very good time, but they were in no hurry to wait and identify the rider.

Faint streaks of dawn were showing in the east, and keeping close behind the young girl, they hurried on to the settlement.

“Better luck next time, I hope,” said Higgins, after he had seen the girl safely to her father’s door.

“I’ll catch that fellow or die in the attempt! He’s the daring desperado this country ever saw! Some day we’ll get him!”

A few minutes later, Higgins was being cared for in one of the cabins, and a group of miners were besieging Taylor with questions.

A posse was formed to go for Tracy’s body, but, for lack of their own, the detectives were not of the number.

The posse were more determined than ever to capture Jesse, but they had found that they must outwit the outlaw.

They could never hope to catch him by the ordinary method of “getting the drop on him,” for that was a feat that was well-nigh impossible.

When the posse returned, they brought the bodies of Doolittle and Tracy, but there was not a trace of the body to be found in the dugout.

Mr. Ferguson took the news of her lover’s death hard, and, for twenty-four hours after the occurrence, she was quiet at the settlement.

CHAPTER X.

TAKEN IN.

“Now then, old man, what is your scheme?” asked Taylor, as he and Taylor rode out of the settlement, a few days later.

He glanced along the road to see that there was no one to hear him, and then outlined the plan which he had in mind for the capture of the great outlaw.

“The situation is this, Higgins. The sheriff is doing up all of the other injured men are crawling into the dugout, and, of course, they are looking forward to a settlement as soon as Frank James is better.”

“What are they going to do with the rascal?”

“To hang him! They are going to string him up to that gallows that stands on the bluff behind Carson’s shanty. That’s the spot where Jesse James lynched the murderer of your father.”

“That will be a sight worth seeing. I would not miss it if I could go to the farm—not because I revel in horrors, but because I believe they can do it!”

“Not?”

“Because Jesse James won’t let them! He’ll find a way of saving his brother.”

“I don’t think of that! It would be a foolhardy thing for him to do, though! Why, every man, woman and child will be on the lookout for him that day, to say nothing of the wolf dogs and bloodhounds in the set-

“Nevertheless, I believe he will come,” said Higgins, again. “He is fond of his brother, they say, in spite of his brutal nature.”

“Well, he’ll buck up against a tough proposition if he attempts to save him,” laughed Taylor. “His chances won’t be one, two, three of ever getting out of the settlement.”

“About when do you anticipate the event will take place?”

“A week from to-day, the sheriff told me. Frank will be feeling chipper by then, and can appreciate the situation.”

“I should say so. And, meanwhile, where do you suppose our quarry is? We have seen nor heard nothing of him since that night at the dugout.”

“We could hardly expect him to keep us posted on his whereabouts, but, as the stage coach from Gold City to Mineville was held up and robbed last night, it is pretty safe to say that he is still in the vicinity.”

“Great Scott! How much did they get?”

“About nine thousand, it is estimated. Mr. Ferguson got a message over his private wire this morning. One of the victims was a nephew of his, who was coming on a visit.”

“But you haven’t told me your scheme yet, old boy! Of course, you’ve hatched up something great while I’ve been grunting around with this hole in my shoulder.”

“Sh! Talk about something else! There’s some one coming!” said Taylor, softly, at the same time breaking out into a peal of rollicking laughter.

An old man was limping toward them, leading a dilapidated mustang, and, as he caught sight of the two detectives, he yelled at the creature savagely.

“Hi, there! Git a move on yer, can’t yer! Reck’n now yer think I kin mosey erlong like this hyar all day! Git erlong, yer brute, or I’ll flay ther hide offer yer!”

He raised a heavy stick as he spoke and brandished it over the poor beast.

“Hold on, there, you old sinner! Drop that stick or I’ll plunk a bullet into you! You ought to be arrested for owning such a piece of horse flesh when good beasts are as plenty as they are in Wyoming!”

As Taylor spoke, he touched his pistol butt significantly, and at once the old fellow’s manner underwent a change.

He jerked off his old hat and made a sort of salaam, and then actually sat down on a rock and waited for them.

“Looks as if he meant to hold us up or something,” said Higgins, under his breath. “At any rate, he’s forgotten his hurry.”

The mustang had stopped at once, as if it was only too

glad to do so, and as the two men rode up it began grazing by the roadside.

The old man glanced up at the detectives as though he hardly knew what to make of them, and, as they were dressed exactly like the miners of the settlement, this made them a trifle suspicious of him.

Taylor winked at Higgins and then checked his horse directly abreast of the rock on which the old fellow was sitting.

"Where the deuce did you come from, anyway, Abraham?" he asked. "Hanged if you don't look like a hobo of the most interesting type! I'm tempted to stop and have a minute's chat with you."

"Most agree'ble, boss! Most agree'ble!" said the old fellow, promptly, "an' p'raps yer won't mind tellin' the old man ther news of ther village."

"But you are on your way there. You'll be in the heart of the settlement in ten minutes," said Higgins, promptly.

"There's nothing we can tell you that you won't hear from the other fellows!"

"I ain't so sure I shall go on," was the astonishing answer. "I mout change my mind an' go on ter ther cañon! Yer see, I'm on er lay fer Jesse James, ther rascally bandit thet's robbin' ther country."

Higgins nearly jumped from his saddle at this bit of information, then he took another look at the ragged old tramp and burst out laughing.

"Well, I'll be hanged! So you are after him, are you! Well, I'll tell you right here, you'd better save your shoe leather! It's a case of a ground mole chasing a comet."

"Yer kin laff at me, boss, but I ain't so sure yer right," said the old fellow, grimly. "What would yer say ef I wuz ter tell yer I near nabbed him last night! I almost had er chance ter grab ther feller's coat tails."

The detectives glanced at each other, for the old man's statement interested them.

They drew nearer to the stone and looked down at him inquiringly.

"He! he! I ain't sech er wurthless critter arter all, am I, boss?" he said, chuckling. "Yer'll hev ter admit ther old man is all right when I tell yer I come within er ace of ketchin' ther outlaw."

Of course you are all right! Who said you wasn't? But where did you do all this, my friend? Is Jesse James still hanging around in this section of the country?"

"Why shouldn't he be, ef he wants ter?" asked the old man, giving Higgins a sharp glance. "What's ther outlaw done in this hyar part of the country? I ain't heerd nothin' of his doin's fer two years or over, excep' ther outrageous deeds he's done in Missouri!"

"Didn't you hear of his killing Sheriff Banning, of Gold City, a few days ago?" asked Higgins, after a signal from Taylor. "He killed the sheriff about ten minutes after the other members of his gang robbed the office of five thousand dollars!"

"And haven't you heard of his stealing two bags of gold from Carson, of the settlement, the other night, and getting away with old Ferguson's daughter?"

"Lawdy, boss! Yer don't say! No, I ain't heerd a word of it! I reckon it wuz while I was comin' ercross

ther mountins. I live on t'other side of the hills, an' be jest two days er comin'!"

"And you are after Jesse James?"

"You bet I'm arter him! I'm er lookin' fer ther thousand thet's been offered by ther Government."

The detectives glanced at each other again, for last they were convinced that the old fellow was ho-

They were beginning to take him for some cra-brained farmer in the mountains who had heard of reward offered for the bandit and had started out, f-like, to try and earn it.

His own and his mustang's appearance spoke quently of what he had endured, and, after another w-or two, the detectives began pitying him.

"You'd better go on to the settlement and tell sheriff your story," said Higgins. "He's a good-hear-fellow, and, no doubt, he'll loan you a horse, then take my advice and get back where you come from."

"But first spin us the yarn about your seeing Jess night," said Taylor, quickly. "It's a good one, I see, by the way your eyes twinkle."

"He! he! I reck'n they do, boss, and no wond-No wonder. As I said, I wuz near enough ter Jess pull his coat tails. Yer see, he'd jest robbed ther sta-coach seven miles from Gold City and he got reckless and wuz imbibin' in spirits—"

Higgins broke in upon his story, for he was anxi-to be going.

"And where were you, old man? Hurry up with y-yarn a little!"

"I wuz hid behind ther rock thet Jess sot down on make ther divvy, but I wuz too scart ter draw er wear-an' thet's ther joke of ther hull story!"

The detectives roared. It capped the climax of t-faith in him.

"I don't blame you, Old Hundred! You would ne-have lived to tell the tale if you had, and, as it is, yo-got a yarn that you can hand down to posterity."

The old man rose and chirped to his horse, with eyes still twinkling, and his bearded lips twitching n-rily.

"So yer think ther sheriff will treat me fair, do ye-he asked, with another sharp glance at Higgins.

"Sure! If you ask him, he'll probably let you sta-the hanging! We're going to string Frank James up that cedar yonder!"

As he spoke, he pointed to a tree that jutted out f-the cliff a half a mile behind, and, as his eyes followed direction indicated, he did not observe the change crossed the old man's features.

"Ther devil! Is thet so! Be yer goin' ter ly him?" he asked, sharply.

The two detectives laughed as they turned away.

"That's what we're going to do, if Jesse James d-interfere and upset our calculations," said Higgins.

The old man mounted his horse and then looked b-at them over his shoulder.

"Thet thar's er sight thet's wurth crossin' ther mo-t'in ter see! Yer'll see me at ther hangin' just ez sur-shootin'! Great Snakes! I wouldn't miss it fer er-lion dollars!"

He rode on slowly and the detectives turned t-heads.

"A bloodthirsty old chap, whoever he is," remarked Higgins. "I was shy of him first, but I guess it was a tight story."

"The twinkle in his eyes made me leary," answered Taylor; then, for some reasons or other he half turned his saddle.

Crack!

A bullet whistled past the place where his right shoulder had been a second before, and he was just in time to a marvelous performance. The skinny old mustang on the tramp on his back had suddenly vaulted over a sized rock and was disappearing through a growth underbrush at the rate of a mile a minute.

Tricked, by thunder! After him, Higgins!" yelled Taylor, as he wheeled around.

Higgins followed suit and both dashed down the road leaving a trail of dust behind them.

At a word, their horses bounded over the rock and crashed through the brush in pursuit of the mustang.

For five minutes they did not get a glimpse of their flying foe; then, as they emerged into a clearer space, Higgins yelled excitedly:

There he is, the sinner, and it is Jesse James himself! He has changed horses somewhere! That is not the stang!"

No, you bet it ain't! That's his own horse, Fleetwind! She must have been hidden here somewhere, and he sprang on to her in passing."

He did not lose a second, nor will we," answered Higgins. "After him, Taylor! We must catch the scoundrel!"

On and on they dashed, but still there was nothing ahead—the bandit king kept exactly the same distance ahead of them.

He's getting rid of his togs," called Taylor, as he vaulted a high bush; "there go his coat and whiskers and the bushes!"

The outlaw chief was now clearly outlined before them, and as they scurried across the hills, he turned and waved his hat to them tauntingly.

He knows his horse is better than ours, but she may be," said Higgins, angrily. "In that case we'd have to be in our power and we wouldn't do a thing to him!"

Hold on, he's turning!" cried Taylor. "Jerusalem! Higgins, the fellow is coming back! By the eternal, did you ever hear of such bravado!"

The two detectives cocked their weapons and went on their mad way, but Jesse James had actually turned his head and was riding toward them slowly.

What the deuce is he thinking about? Does he expect to pick us off one by one as we come up? We'll catch him, if he does, by parting at yonder bushes!"

Yes, you go to the east and I'll go to the west, and we'll make him shoot in two directions at once!"

Look out for him, old man! There may be some sense in his madness!"

The last words did not come a minute too soon, for at the second a pistol spoke sharply in the rear of the detectives.

Higgins looked over his shoulder, without slackening speed.

Two riders had sprung up apparently from the bushes. It was a trap laid by Jesse James.

They were between two enemies.

Higgins yelled a warning at his friend, but he was a second too late.

Crack!

Crack!

The two ruffians in the rear had both aimed at the same man, and without a groan Taylor fell from his saddle.

In a second their weapons were turned upon Higgins, but, by urging his horse over a thick hedge, he evaded the bullets.

Then a chorus of yells came like music to his ears, and a posse from the settlement came dashing after the outlaws.

There was a shout from Jesse James that was intended as an order to his men, then Fleetwind disappeared among the trees, once more carrying her master to safety.

The posse charged across the brush and succeeded in shooting down one of the outlaw gang; then, with the injured detective between them, they made their way back to the settlement.

Higgins was bitterly chagrined at his stupidity in being so easily taken in by the story of the outlaw.

It was nearly a week before Taylor was able to ride again, and by this time the plans to hang Frank James had been carefully laid by the miners.

The detectives had been actually forced into witnessing the hanging, but they were still doubtful about the enterprise going through successfully.

When the day finally dawned, they assumed new disguises and reconnoitred every corner of the settlement that they thought might be overlooked by the others, and which might serve as a hiding place for the notorious outlaw.

CHAPTER XI

THE LYNCHING.

"What luck, old man?"

"None. I can't find hide nor hair or them! There don't seem to be a man in the settlement that can't give a square account of himself. If Jesse James is here, he is out of sight completely."

"That's my idea of it. I've looked over all the niggers and rounded up all the Chinamen, and, besides, every path to the settlement has been guarded for the last twenty-four hours. It begins to look as though the sheriff would succeed in his undertaking."

"Do you know which goes up first?"

"The fellow, Mason. The miners are saving the best until the last. They'll test the gallows with Mason before they risk stringing up the second biggest outlaw in the country."

"I guess the cedar will hold all right; and there isn't much danger of the men picking out a rotten rope."

"I should say not."

The detectives had met in the space behind the jail, and, as they spoke, they both glanced up to the summit of a bluff, where half a dozen men were busy arranging a rope over a branch of a sturdy cedar.

Just then, two men on horseback turned the corner of the jail and took a sharp look at the faces of the detectives.

"Hello, Hines! You are on the same lay, are you? Well, there's no one here! We've searched every foot of ground from the jail to the cedars."

"I reckon we've had our searchin' for nothin'," said one of the men, who was the storekeeper in the settlement. "Jesse James ain't visitin' Pine Ridge ter-day, an' it's well he ain't, fer he wouldn't never leave it."

"Ther day ain't done yet," said the other rider, grimly. "Look out fer Jesse James, I sez, when yer least expects him! He's liable ter come up through ther bowlders at any minute."

"Oh, I guess not, Hank, said Higgins, laughing. "He isn't quite such a magican as that! The fellow is strictly a flesh-and-blood monster."

"Hello! There they go! The ceremonies must be commencing!" exclaimed Taylor, glancing up the path to the cedar.

A group of miners, with their wives and children, were scrambling up the rough ascent and laughing as merrily as though they were going to a picnic.

A noise at the door of the jail could be heard at that minute, and the two horsemen and the detectives, who were on foot, went around to investigate.

A posse of men were leading Bill Mason out, and, as the crowd in front of the jail saw him, it broke into cries and curses.

"There he is! He's one of the James gang! String him up, the robber! Hanging is too good for him!"

The detectives moved on around the edge of the crowd and, while they took an active interest in the proceedings, they studied all of the faces.

Every inhabitant of the settlement was out in the street, so that the crowd represented a motley collection of types and nations.

White men, Indians, negroes and Chinese made up the greater number, but here and there was seen both the Hebrew and Gaelic features.

The detectives looked them over critically as they had done several times before that day, and, whenever a face of one or those present bothered them, they inquired as to his identity.

It was necessary to the public safety that every individual in the settlement should be identified upon this occasion, and several of the miners were circulating through the crowd, bent upon the selfsame errand.

The sheriff had recovered from his wounds, and, as he left the jail to mount a horse, which was awaiting him at the block, the crowd broke loose and cheered him to the echo.

Higgins pulled off his hat and joined in the cry, and, at the same time, his eyes fell upon the face of a big negro who stood near him.

The sun was in the fellow's eyes, and he had pulled his hat brim down low, nor did he remove it to join in the demonstration.

Higgins moved a little nearer, keeping up his cheering as he went, but, just as he got near the fellow, some one crowded between them.

"Hurrah for Carson! Down with the robbers!"

shouted the fellow, at the same time giving Higgins shove that nearly knocked him over.

The detective struck out with his right arm and the lubber a clip under the ear, and, as the fellow went down in the crowd, he looked for the negro.

The negro had vanished!

Higgins moved rapidly through the crowd, but he was baffled in his chase by the surging and swaying of the people.

Sheriff Carson had started to lead his posse through the village street, and, as Bill Mason was bound on horse's back by two determined miners, the people led their heads completely and tossed in every direction.

"Hang him!"

"Lynch him!"

Riddle him with bullets!"

"Jerk the son-of-a-gun up and let him swing, and sure that Frank James can see him!" shouted the people.

Higgins was obliged to fall back to let the posse through, and then the crowd hemmed him in so that a further pursuit of the negro at that time was impossible.

The sheriff headed for the cliff and the posse followed him, one of the men leading the prisoner's horse and a hooting and jeering.

Higgins looked around for Taylor, and finally saw him, and, as soon as they could make their way through the crowd, the two were together.

"Any news?" whispered Taylor, as they followed on up the hill.

"None, only I just saw a nigger whose face I can place. He was a big, strapping fellow, and wore a slouch hat, with a quill stuck through it."

"The devil he did! Then the thing means something I just saw a white man with the same kind of an ornament!"

The two detectives looked at each other, but there was no time to stop; they were obliged to keep moving.

"Did you know your man?"

"Yes. His name is Wilson. Carson hired him only yesterday to replace Dick Tracy."

"Then he's spoiled his own game, I'll bet! That quill means something, or there wouldn't two of them be wearing it! Carson was a chump to hire a man just now, unless he knew him thoroughly."

"Probably he thought he did. Carson is pretty cautious. The fellow may have been all right once, but has gone over to the enemy."

"Hello! What's that?"

A shout from the crowd answered him.

The rope was already around Mason's neck and the people were going crazy.

"Who is guarding the jail?" asked Higgins, softly.

"Mr. Ferguson himself and a dozen of the bravest miners! They have taken all the precautions. Frank James is as safe as possible."

"Nevertheless, I believe I'll go back," said Higgins.

"All right, old man! I'll go back with you, then! That is, if we can get through this mob! They're red hot to see the hanging."

His remarks was directed toward the crowd of people who were surging up the hill, all with their necks and eyes strained for a glimpse of the cedar.

the two made their way down the hill, the sheriff's suddenly reached them.

He was performing the last act of Pine Ridge courtesy toward the outlaw, Bill Mason.

"What have you got to say for yourself, why you didn't be hung, you robber?" he thundered. "Is there any extenuating circumstances that will make us give you more mercy and put a bullet through your neck, instead of breakin' your neck with the slip-noose?"

The detectives paused a minute, but there was no reason and they started on down the grade as swiftly as possible.

When a yell went up from the throats of the crowd, telling them that Bill Mason's body had been jerked into the air, and, almost at the same moment, there was the flash of a revolver.

"Thunder! They've shot him, after all!" yelled a man whose eyes were fixed upon the cedar. "They've put a bullet through the fellow's heart. Now, who the devil did it?"

Higgins turned and glanced upward to the brink of the cliff.

When he did so, he caught a glimpse of the dangling body, a faint puff of smoke half obscured his vision.

Fifty feet above him stood a big negro with a quill in his hat, and the puff of smoke issued from his right pocket.

"We've got him!" whispered Higgins to Taylor, as the negro wheeled around. "That nigger ahead is the fellow, right. He took that shot right through his coat! One of the gang, I'll bet my boots on it!"

Taylor whipped out his revolver and leveled it at the negro's head, while the people fell out of range with cries of terror.

"Stand up, you black devil! I mean you, you Ajax with the quill in your hat! Surrender, or I'll fire! I'll shoot the outlaw!"

The negro wheeled around, but, in a second, the crowd stood the situation and a couple of well-executed shots from one of the miners sent the fellow sprawling. "Now, then, men! Look out for every man who has a quill in his hat! It's a secret signal and means he's a friend of the outlaws!"

Taylor shouted the words, a panic ensued and the outlaws did hard work to get out of the thick of it.

The posse had just started from the cedar to go down toward Frank James, when a perfect volley of shots was fired around the jail.

"Click! They've attacked the jail! Now's our chance!" yelled Taylor, as he made a break for one of the horses that had been left on the edge of the ascent where the posse dismounted.

Higgins helped himself to another horse and, together, they dashed down to the main street of the village.

The posse had a five minutes' start and, besides, they had gained the posse by stealing two of their best horses.

They galloped toward the jail, horsemen came from all directions. Shrill whistles were sounding, and riders had guarded the various paths came riding furiously.

Among them were two who wore quills in their hats. They were the two who had guarded the trail to the Roaring Cañon.

The detectives were in time to see a wonderful spectacle.

Jesse James stood, surrounded by his own men, upon the steps of the jail, assisting his brother to step over a half-a-dozen dead bodies.

The great outlaw was unmasked and his pistols were in his belt. He was depending upon the fierce-looking outlaws who hemmed him in to protect him from danger.

A perfect fusillade was being poured at the natives who had reached the jail and, under this shower of hail, the detectives emptied their weapons.

"Crack! Bang! Crack!" went the pistols, and man after man fell, but in a second Jesse and Frank James were on the backs of their horses, their men following them instantly and scattering in all directions.

The two detectives dashed after the brothers, emptying their weapons as fast as they could load them.

By this time a band of fifty miners were hot on the chase, and bullets whistles and struck in every direction.

Then some one discovered the dead body of Mr. Ferguson on the steps of the jail, and a shout for vengeance went up that reached the ears of the detectives.

On went the outlaws, with the detectives close upon their heels, both couples riding so fiercely that anything like aiming was impossible.

Once Jesse James turned and emptied his revolvers.

A bullet grazed Taylor's arm, but he dashed on, recklessly, trying his best to draw a bead on the flying bandit.

"Their horses are winded! We'll catch them yet!" yelled Higgins, as they followed their leaders in the direction of Roaring Cañon.

"Stick to it, old man! We've got to catch 'em! Curse the bloody rascals! Why can't I hit 'em?"

"Because the devil protects his own," was the breathless answer.

Then Higgins took another shot, and the horse that Frank James was riding dropped like a log beneath him.

In a second the outlaw was up behind his brother, and emptying his pistols squarely into their faces.

Higgins checked his speed as the bullets whistled past his ears, and in a minute more Taylor was forced to do likewise.

"Stop! This is fools' work! That horse will give out in a minute, and then we'll have them at our mercy!" cried Higgins.

"Will we? I'm not so sure! Look there!" yelled Taylor.

Higgins glanced ahead.

At the turn in the path two magnificent animals, fully saddled, were standing, while a third was ten feet away on the other side of the roadway.

As the outlaws passed them, they fairly slid from their own beast and sprang on to the others, as lightly as feathers.

The detectives redoubled their speed, and sent a volley after them.

They had the pleasure of seeing Frank James reel in his saddle.

He would have fallen if his brother had not reached over and steadied him.

Then something sprang from the bushes directly in front of their own steeds, and the detectives had all they could do to keep their seats for a minute.

"By Jove! Unitah and her Injuns! Curse the girl! She's an outlaw, too, and yet we can't shoot her!"

The outlaws dashed out of sight, while the detectives, who had now swept by the Indians, were controlling their horses, and then the two detectives glanced back over their shoulders.

There stood Unitah and Star Eye in the middle of the path, where they had landed like wild things, in the hope of scaring the horses.

"On! On!" yelled Taylor. "Never mind the girl! She'll put a bullet into us in a minute, if we stop! See! They are going straight for the cañon! After them, Higgins!"

Their horses fairly flew over the trail, and added the thunder of their hoofbeats to the roaring in the cañon.

They caught a glimpse of the outlaws as they passed the dugout, and crept on without a look towards the scene of their recent thrilling experience.

Five minutes later they had rounded a steep turn and come to a spot which they had not known existed.

Before them was a space of, perhaps, forty rods; then the cañon dipped steeply to a ledge of rock, below the brink of which they could hear the mountain stream foaming.

Jesse James and his brother were both on the very edge of this precipice, and both seemed to be urging their horses over.

Frank James was sitting erect in his saddle once more, although the detectives could see that one arm hung limply.

"Great Scott! Are they trying to commit suicide?" roared Taylor. "That will mean that we are to be cheated of our prey after all. Great G—! The horses are over!"

As he spoke, there was a neigh from a frightened steed; then the two riders leaned forward, gripping the pommels of their saddles.

A moment later there were two distinct splashes in the water.

The detectives put spurs to their horses and galloped forward.

As they reached the ledge of rock, they saw a curve in the cañon, which showed that the robbers had no need to leap over the precipice.

They dismounted from their horses and crept forward cautiously.

The stream was not so far below as they had been led

to believe, and it looked deep enough to inspire a degree of confidence.

Spreading out into a narrow lake, it swept to a level shore, which was overgrown with low trees and bushes. Then, a little below, it narrowed again, going on in a wild stream down another decline in the mountains.

That the robbers had taken the leap before was proved after a minute, for they both emerged safely from the water on the opposite bank, but minus one of their horses. They were out of range of the detectives' bullets, so both stood for a moment upon the bank, gazing at them tauntingly.

"Good-by, brave sleuths! Clever sleuths! We will meet again!" shouted Jesse James, gayly. "Good-by, and better luck next time, you bloodhounds!"

The detectives did not reply, but turned away, with chagrin. They might risk their own necks in such a perilous jump, if it was necessary to do so in escaping from a foe, but, under the existing conditions, it would be folly to do so.

The last they saw of Jesse James he was waving his hat derisively and yelling his scornful words across the foaming waters.

When they saw him next the scene had changed a little, but it is not for us to recount that in this story.

The episodes in the life of the noted bandit could hardly be chronicled in one story; therefore, no one would have hoped to do it justice.

The detectives returned to the settlement, looking sharply for Unitah, but they never saw the girl again while they stayed in Wyoming.

The scene around the jail resembled a battle field, for there were an even score of dead men, counting bandits and miners.

The sheriff's folly in hiring a man whom he could not "swear by" at that important time had brought about a scene of riot and bloodshed upon them. This fellow, who but recently joined Jesse James' gang, and he had brought a dozen treacherous miners to help the outlaws to victory.

The result was the escape of Frank James from the jail and another demonstration of the Bandit King's daring.

THE END.

Next week's JESSE JAMES STORIES (No. 9) will contain "Jesse James at the Throttle; or, The Hold-Up at Dead Man's Ditch," in which the further adventures of the famous Bandit King will be detailed.

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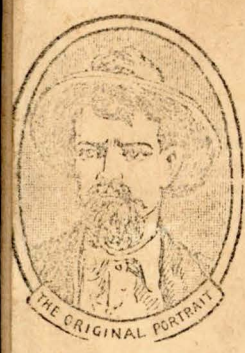
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